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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Kindergarten: A Part of the Educational System

by

Janet Anne Slack

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Administration

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1986

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ISBN 0-315-32358-2

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Kindergarten: A Part of the Educational System submitted by Janet Anne Slack in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

.....

Supervisor

.....

.....

Date. September 19, 1986

Dedication

To the two preschoolers in my life "Chelsea and Meghan"

Abstract

The purpose of this study was

1. to investigate the opinions of selected school administrators about major events in the development of early childhood services programs,
2. to investigate the opinions of selected school administrators about the present organization and possible incorporation of kindergartens as a required part of the educational system,
3. to explain what these school administrators see as some of the advantages and disadvantages of this possible incorporation.

Data were collected by the use of a semi-structured interview. Seven interviews were carried out with individuals who had been extensively involved in early childhood services programs in the Edmonton Public School District. The length of the interviews ranged from one and a half to two and a half hours. The data from the interviews were analyzed by the means of latent content analysis.

A number of conclusions were drawn from the study.

1. There is a dearth of literature that deals with the kindergarten area. This was evidenced by the fact that many of the sources used in this study were from primary sources, e.g., reports, government documents, minutes, etc. There were very few secondary level studies that could be found.
2. The relationship of school board operated kindergartens

and privately operated kindergartens is under researched. This again was evidenced by the lack of material in this area.

3. Those individuals in administrative positions in school board operated kindergartens know little about how privately operated programs function. This was evident when the interviewees were asked about private operators and most indicated they knew little or nothing about these types of programs.
4. Parents played a large part in the development and operation of kindergarten programs. There was concern that if kindergartens became a mandatory part of the school system this parental involvement may be lost.
5. Kindergartens underwent a process of rationalization when they became a de facto part of the school system, this had both positive and negative consequences.
6. Most of the people interviewed felt that there was a need for two types of kindergarten operators within the province.
7. The individuals interviewed did not feel that kindergarten should become a required part of the school system.
8. There was a paradox in regard to the incorporation of kindergarten as a part of the school system. As noted above interviewees did not feel that it should be incorporated, yet on the other hand each one of them was able to cite a number of advantages to its

incorporation.

9. Many of the issues that surrounded the early development of kindergartens were being raised again as the issue of articulation emerged. These issues related to parental involvement, transitions between levels, and the downward projection of grade one requirements.
10. Articulation was generally viewed as a positive move provided that the issues highlighted above could be resolved and that kindergarten did not loose its autonomy.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people:

My committee members, Dr. Al MacKay, Dr. Ed Seger and Dr. Myer Horowitz for their advice and encouragement;

The interviewees who participated in the study and provided data;

The Edmonton Public School District who granted the leave which enabled me to pursue graduate studies and complete my Masters Degree;

My mother and father, Mae and Joe Storcer, who have always supported and encouraged my endeavors. Together, and yet in their own way, my parents have instilled the value of a good education and for this I am eternally grateful;

Last, but far from least, my husband and friend, Trevor whose great "organizational" skills assisted in the completion of this thesis. For without Trevor's love, guidance and never-ending support I would not have realized my goal.

To all these I am grateful.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

In the early 1970's concern on the part of parents, educators and government over the quality and coordination of preschool education resulted in the incorporation, in 1973, of an organizational unit known as Early Childhood Services. This unit was incorporated as a branch within the Alberta Department of Education. The Early Childhood Services Branch was specifically designed to provide:

> a coordinated delivery system of local, regional, and provincial programs concerned with the developmental and special needs of children and their families with particular emphasis on the pre-school years(Alberta Education, 1982:1).

The incorporation of this type of coordinated system of programs into the Department of Education was based on the premise that the experiences children have during the early years of their life are crucial to their future attitudes to learning. Consequently it was felt that some degree of control was required over these experiences and early childhood services programs were developed. An early childhood services program refers to:

> a program for children, parents and staff, with educational goals and objectives, funded by Alberta Education under the Early Childhood Services program, and which makes use of the services provided by a variety of government departments and community agencies(Alberta Education, 1984a:iii)

One aspect of early childhood services programs with which this thesis is particularly concerned is the kindergarten program (4 1/2 - 5 1/2 year olds). The Alberta School Act makes reference to this age group of children under the rubric "early childhood services programs" and in two separate parts of the Act. In Part 5 of the Alberta School Act, Administration of Districts and Divisions and Employment of Teachers "Powers and Duties" 72(4)(1) it is pointed out that:

> A board, subject to this Act and the regulations, may ...(1)provide for an early childhood services program in accordance with the regulations under the Department of Education Act and charge tuition fees and transportation fees for children attending the program (Government of the Province of Alberta, 1982).

In Part 8 of the Alberta School Act, School, reference to early childhood services programs is made under "Agreements" 169 (f). Here it is stated that:

> A board with the prior approval of the Minister may... (f)enter into an agreement with any person or organization to provide an early childhood services program to children resident in the district or division (Government of the Province of Alberta, 1982).

The Department of Education Act (1980) also makes specific reference to the rules and regulations governing early childhood services programs under 6 (1) (g),(h),(i),(j),(k),(l). Here it is stated that:

> The Minister may make regulations:
> (g)prohibiting any person from offering or providing an early childhood services program unless he is licensed to do so under the regulations;
> (h)governing the establishment, administration, operation, management and control of early childhood services programs;

(i)concerning the issue of licences to persons offering or providing early childhood services programs and the suspension and cancellation of licences so issued;
(j)concerning the certification and special requirements of teachers and the cancellation and suspension of certificates of teachers who are involved in early childhood services programs;
(k)concerning the qualifications of persons who may act as instructional assistants and aides in institutions offering early childhood services programs;
(l)defining the expression "early childhood services programs" for the purposes of the regulations, and the Regulation's Act applies to any regulation made under this section (Government of the Province of Alberta, 1980).

What has evolved in the Province of Alberta as a result of these regulations are two distinct types of early childhood services program operators. These are commonly referred to as school board operated programs and privately operated early childhood services programs. The Department of Education Act, The Early Childhood Services Teachers' Qualifications Regulations defines school board operators as:

> a board of trustees of a school district or school division and includes the council of a county and the council of a city or town merged pursuant to The Municipal and School Administration Act whose early childhood services program has been approved by the Minister (Government of the Province of Alberta, 1980).

Private operators may be one of two types, those run by private early childhood service societies and those run by individuals as private schools. They are defined respectively in the following manner:

1. a society or a corporation that
   a. is a non-profit organization,
   b. is incorporated under the Societies Act, The Companies Act, or Cooperatives Association

Act;
c. has filed with the Minister evidence of incorporation along with a copy of the by-laws of the society or corporation, and
d. has had its program approved by the Minister;
2. an individual
a. who does not operate for monetary gain, and
b. whose program has been approved by the Minister (Government of the Province of Alberta, 1980)

The school board operated programs are run by school boards within the province. The kindergarten programs are conducted in various schools within the individual school boards. The early childhood services teacher is a member of the individual school's staff and therefore an integral part of the school system. The second type of kindergartens, private early childhood service societies and private school early childhood services, are referred to collectively as privately operated kindergartens (as outlined above). These programs are run independently of the school system by societies, corporations or private individuals; however, those individuals who staff these programs must "qualify as early childhood services teachers in accordance with [Department of Education] regulations" (Alberta Teachers Association, 1983:76). The Department of Education Act, The Early Childhood Services Teachers' Qualifications Regulations sets forth the following covering regulations:

1. An operator in conducting an early childhood services program may employ as early childhood services teachers only those persons qualified as early childhood services teachers in accordance with these regulations.
2. To qualify as an early childhood services teacher, a person shall have (a)an Alberta teaching certificate or a letter of authority, and (b)a special early childhood services diploma or an interim permit (Government of the

Province of Alberta, 1980).

The emergence of these types of kindergarten operators, school board and private early childhood services operators has brought with it some distinct differences in the opportunities they provide. These opportunities are elaborated on in the ensuing text and summarized in Table 1.

First, since they are situated within a school, school board operators are able to take advantage of the facilities and resources of the school and the system in which they operate. For example, children can take advantage of other school facilities such as libraries, drama areas, gymnasia and so on. They can also make use of school system resources such as teaching materials, audio-visual aids, psychologists, speech therapists and other resource personnel. Students are also able to take advantage of opportunities that are made available to the school through the school system but which are not necessarily available to privately operated programs, for example, visits by cultural groups, artists or the opportunity to attend sporting events. Private operators, on the other hand, may operate in church basements, community halls, daycare centres, etc. and consequently they are not able to provide similar facilities, resources and opportunities for their students.

There is also a difference between these two agencies in relation to the organizational suprastructure which each can utilize. School board operators can make use of the administrative apparatus present within the system to

disperse funds to individual schools, pay teachers, handle benefits for programs and teachers, maintain classrooms and facilities, provide insurance, etc. On the other hand private operators may rely on a handful of supportive parents or one individual to administer the complexities of their program.

Another relevant point relates to the relative stability of the administrative suprastructure of school board operators vis a vis private operators. In the former, this administrative structure generally exhibits some degree of stability as usually administrators do not change rapidly. However in the case of the private operator, where the administrative suprastructure is often comprised of parents or private individuals, the administrators who make up the executive may vary almost yearly. This point may be extended to relate to the stability of facilities as again in the former there is usually little change, however in the latter since facilities are often in church halls, community buildings, etc., they may change from year to year. Finally the day to day stability of private operated programs may be influenced by the activities of other groups in the same facility and the maintenance of adequate program funding.

Discrepancies between school board operators and private operators can also arise in relation to benefits for the teacher. Teachers employed by school board operators are considered a part of the total school system and consequently they have access to the resources it possesses.

For example, these teachers have access to such benefits as teacher aides, professional secretaries and such employment "perks" as professional development days, teachers' conferences, in-service programs, teacher effectiveness programs and travel money. They are also eligible for membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association and can avail themselves of the services it provides. Integration in the school system means teachers are able to gain the support and services of other educational personnel within the school and the system, for example, area consultants, psychologists, and special teachers such as those who may instruct music and physical education within the school.

Yet another discrepancy between the two types of operators arises when salaries of teachers from school board operators and those of private operators are compared. Teachers who are paid by private operators are generally paid on a much lower scale than those teachers paid by school board operators. Part of this difference is based on the fact that private school teachers are not part of a collective bargaining unit and therefore belong to the Alberta Teachers' Association as associate members which minimizes their bargaining power. A more obvious difference is the government funding allocated to school board operators as opposed to private operators in terms of total program funding. Obviously monetarily it is more beneficial for a teacher to be involved with a school board operated program as opposed to a privately operated program.

As can be seen it appears that the majority of advantages lie with school board operated programs. The one major advantage that private operators do have is the fact that they are relatively autonomous and not subject to many of the constraints (e.g. fixed breaks, formalized patterns of operation, etc.) that are faced by school board operators.

A final and very important point, for this study, which relates to the operation of two types of kindergarten operators is the fact that at the present time and under the present system attendance at kindergarten classes of any type in the province of Alberta is not required as part of a child's formal education. Consequently some parents choose to enroll their children, others do not. Figures gathered from the Early Childhood Services Branch do however support the premise of overwhelming parental support for the program as 98% of kindergarten age children attend a kindergarten program. The discrepancy in facilities, resources, teachers, etc. between public and private kindergartens can consequently lead to students entering grade one with varying degrees of preparation. It can also lead to teachers and parents placing varying expectations on these students as they enter grade one. At the present time kindergarten programs may differ in their goals, the principles on which they (the kindergartens) are operated, the material and equipment they use and the role which parents play in the delivery of programs. Also the philosophies of teachers,

Table 1

A Comparison of School Board and Privately Operated Kindergartens

AREA	SCHOOL BOARD OPERATED	PRIVATELY OPERATED
Teacher Benefits	Member ATA, pension, benefits, system inservices, professional development days, member of school staff.	Associate member of ATA, may not have benefits, pension, etc. may teach alone.
Facilities	Stable, housed in schools, access to special areas, e.g. gyms, music rooms, etc.	Liable to change, housed in churches, community halls, etc., usually no access to special areas.
Student Benefits	Access to library, gymnasiums, resource personnel, school community.	Autonomous program, may lack access to various resources.
Program Needs	Close assimilation through K - 3, school or system planning.	Teacher directed planning.
Support Staff	Psychologists, speech therapists, etc.	Depend on Health Unit, Social Services, etc., for support staff.
Admin.	System administration handles funds, salaries, benefits, maintenance, etc., stable.	Individual administration, may change each year, operator/ parent group handles funds, salaries, etc.
Salaries and Benefits	Scale established by ATA and local bargaining unit.	Decided by employer (society or private operator).

schools, systems, etc. may influence the implementation and delivery of programs. For example, the repeating of the kindergarten year for particular students, and the possible issuing of report cards may all be handled differently by different kindergartens. Although each program must assess its own particular needs there is no standard curriculum developed for the province which would increase consistency in the kindergarten area. We have however in the past year seen more emphasis placed on an integration of the kindergarten through grade three school years. This has been evidenced by the promulgation of a recent research paper initiated and introduced by the Early Childhood Services Branch of Alberta Education. This paper was entitled "Articulation Linkages: Children and Parents in Early/Basic Education".

> {It} was conducted to study and document the factors associated with successful articulation of early childhood services and primary school programs. Articulation as defined for this study has to do with providing continuity of experience for children according to their individual needs from early childhood services through the primary grades. Data were collected through observations in early childhood services and Grade 1 classrooms and through interviews with teachers, principals and parents. (Alberta Education, 1984b:i)

From the focus of this study it can be seen that kindergarten is indeed viewed by our provincial educational system as an integral and important aspect of a child's complete education. However as previously shown there are problems and therefore the question can be raised why is it not then incorporated into the school system and made a

grade of school that a child is required to attend.

B. Statement of the Problem

As a result of the concerns previously outlined and the general belief that kindergarten is de facto a part of the required schooling of each child in Alberta, the purpose of this study will be:

1. to investigate the opinions of selected school administrators about major events in the development of early childhood services programs;
2. to investigate the opinions of selected school administrators about the present organization and possible incorporation of kindergartens as a required part of the educational system;
3. to explain what these school administrators see as some of the advantages and disadvantages of this possible incorporation.

C. Justification for the Study

Over the past fifteen years those involved with early childhood education in the province of Alberta have observed dramatic changes in the implementation of these programs. One of the most notable changes would be the restructuring of services within school board operated programs. Emphasis has been placed on the informal incorporation of the kindergarten year into the total spectrum of the early childhood school years, kindergarten through grade three.

Recent research conducted by Alberta Education, Planning Services entitled "Articulation Linkages" is examining the provision of a continuity of experiences from early childhood services through the primary grades.

It would seem timely and appropriate that an investigation of the major events in the development of early childhood services programs, the opinions of those staff involved with early childhood services programs as to the incorporation of kindergarten and the advantages and disadvantages of this incorporation be conducted. This type of study would help substantiate or challenge the kindergarten to grade three school philosophy that Alberta Education is currently researching.

Appropriately the investigation should be conducted within a school system and the one chosen for the purposes of this study will be the Edmonton Public School District. A clear understanding of the role of the kindergarten year within a school system will be developed from data provided by a number of key informants who are or have in the past been involved in an administrative capacity in early childhood education. Since these individuals are often those who are primary decision makers in the school system it is their opinions that may have influence on the future direction of programs. Questions will be raised as to whether the kindergarten year should be included as a part of the school system's compulsory education and the advantages and disadvantages of this action. Although many

educators have posed and discussed this idea informally, no formal study in this province has investigated the opinions of key informants about this possibility.

D. Definition of Terms

Articulation

A process which ensures continuity in the learning experiences of children accomplished through ongoing cooperative development, implementation and evaluation of early childhood services and primary education programs by **instructional staff**, e.g. teachers, aides,..., **program administrators**, e.g., principals, supervisors, coordinators,..., **parents** and, **community resource persons**, e.g., public health nurses, librarians, ... in keeping with the principles of child development (sic)(Alberta Education, 1986b).

Early Childhood Services Program

An early childhood services program refers to a program for children, parents and staff, with educational goals and objectives, funded by Alberta Education, under the Early Childhood Services Branch, and which makes use of the services provided by a variety of government departments and community agencies (Alberta Education, 1984a:iii).

Early Childhood Services Branch

A branch within the Alberta Department of Education directed at the integration of educational, health, recreational, and social services for young children below the age of school entrance(Alberta Education, 1985:15).

Education

Any experiences which contribute to the development of the whole child. Education, in this sense, is a shared responsibility of the home, school, church, and community (Alberta Education, 1984a:iii).

Operator

An "operator" is a school board or private non-profit community-based society, incorporated under the Societies Act (RSA 1980, Ch.S-18) or other legal entity that offers an early childhood services program(Alberta Education, 1985:16).

Staff

Those who admininster, deliver or support the early childhood services program, such as coordinators, teachers, instructional assistants, aides and volunteers who work with young children in an early childhood services program (Alberta Education, 1984a:iii).

E. Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

The study was limited to :

1. the extent that the respondents were knowledgable and willing to give truthful and accurate responses;
2. by the interview technique used to elicit the appropriate data and;
3. how representative the opinions of administrators selected were of all administrators concerned with early childhood services programs within Edmonton Public School District.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to a selected group of administrators, e.g. supervisors, principals, and coordinators, who were and/or are currently involved in the early childhood services programs of the Edmonton Public School District.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the opinions of selected school administrators about the development of early childhood services programs, the incorporation of the kindergarten year as a required part of the provincial educational system and subsequently to explain what are seen as some of the advantages and disadvantages of this type of incorporation. Consequently it was felt that the review of literature should deal with three areas.

1. The events surrounding the establishment of Early Childhood Services Programs in the province of Alberta in 1973 and its subsequent development. This was deemed important as it would allow the current situation to be compared with the original intent of early childhood services programs. Consequently areas of similarity could be highlighted as could areas where the original intent of the programs had been lost and the programs had been appropriated for alternate purposes.
2. The development and role of the early childhood services programs as perceived in one school district: the Edmonton Public School District. It was felt that the information generated in this part of the study would be useful as the focus of the research was on the present

organization and possible incorporation of the kindergarten year as a mandatory component of a child's schooling. Consequently it became important to gain a perception of how a school district viewed this type of program. Edmonton was seen as an appropriate district as apart from its convenience to the researcher it was one of two school boards (the other being Calgary) to receive funding for a pilot kindergarten project (Project Tenderness) prior to the formation of the Early Childhood Services Branch in 1973.

3. The potential ramifications of the "Articulation Planning Policy", recently released by the Alberta Department of Education, for the future of Early Childhood Services Programs in the province was also examined. Since this policy essentially suggests that the kindergarten year be involved with program and curriculum planning with grades one through three this will have implications for the kindergarten year and its possible further inclusion as a part of mandatory schooling.

It was felt that information from these three areas was also relevant as it would i) provide a basis from which the research instrument could be developed ii) it would highlight both the past development and present orientation of early childhood sevices programs in the province, thus allowing comparisons with administrator's perceptions and iii) it would provide relevant information with which the

results of this study could be compared.

B. Events Surrounding the Development of Early Childhood Services Programs in the Province of Alberta

In 1969 the N-12 Education Task Force was established by the Alberta Department of Education's Commission on Educational Planning. Its mandate was "to examine in depth that segment of Alberta's educational structure commonly referred to as 'elementary and secondary schools'". The scope of concern of the Task Force subsequently encompassed the ages of three to eighteen years.

In relation to the early years of a child's education, i.e., below 5 1/2 years of age, the report referred to this as 'Early Education' (p. 16). In general the opinion of the task force on early education was consistent with other world views (e.g. British Infant School) that the "early years of a child's life are the most creative and productive" (Worth, 1971:16). Consequently the strongest recommendations coming out of this report in regard to Early Childhood Education were that:

a. the potential of early childhood education lies in the provision of appropriate experiences...Rather than thinking in terms of extending schooling downward, it is felt that all education should proceed from the basis of the earliest possible exposure to learning experiences, and that these should be primarily in the 'feeling' and 'doing' fields rather than the 'thinking' field.
b. It is strongly urged that there be a major shift of thinking from that of relating studentship with specific chronological age.
c. It is felt that in Alberta it is difficult

to establish 'N' as a constant.[1] Furthermore, as society shifts, so demands for extending education in any direction is bound to shift.

d. It is urged that increased involvement of parents of children younger than the present Grade 1 age be sought and that this whole process be propelled at greater speed.

e. While there are some excellent kindergartens in existence, a responsible viewpoint compels us to deplore the existence and casual mushrooming of many second-rate kindergartens...Poor quality of educational experiences is being provided under often inadequate conditions, physical, emotional and environmental.

f. Present trends indicate that, because of working mothers, marriage breakdown, economic pressure, etc., an increasing number of children below the age of 5 1/2 are being ignored from the standpoint of receiving valuable learning experiences (Worth, 1971:16-17).

As a result of the recommendations put forth by the Task Force the following proposal regarding Early Childhood Education was promulgated.

> Proposal No. 2: that for the period up to 1980 public institutions be established in Alberta to which parents may, at their discretion, bring their children when they reach ages 3, 4 or 5. The emphasis in these institutions should be on providing children with a variety of experiences in an environment in which children are able to move at their own rate. It is presumed that these children will move continually toward Phase B[2] of the educational system. Maturity would be a major criterion upon which to base movement from Phase A[3] to Phase B (Worth, 1971:16-17).

At the same time as the Worth Commission Report was putting forth various recommendations for educational

---

[1]In this respect 'N' was used to denote nursery or preschool.
[2]Phase B would serve children ages 6 - 10 as proposed by the N - 12 Education Task Force.
[3]Phase A would serve children ages 3 - 5 as proposed by the N - 12 Education Task Force.

procedures across the province, there was a concurrent growing concern on the part of educators and parents to establish some form of "universal" program for the children of 4 1/2 - 5 1/2 years, i.e. pre-grade one. During the years 1971 and 1972 a number of studies were conducted to investigate the implications of such a program and how it should be implemented. Some of the more notable studies used to set the foundation for later government policies on early childhood education were, as previously mentioned the N-12 Education Task Force, plus in addition, the Minister's Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Education, and a policy paper entitled, Opportunities for Infants, by L.W. Downey Research Associates Ltd.(Government of Alberta, 1973:1).

The Minister's Advisory Committee was the body that in June, 1973 was replaced by the Early Childhood Services Directorate of the Alberta Department of Education. The Downey policy paper was prepared by a private research firm (L.W. Downey Research Associates) and was a follow-up to the provincial Human Resources Research Council's experimental projects in Edmonton (Project Tenderness) and Calgary. The Downey paper summarized existing knowledge on early education and made a number of recommendations on early childhood development. It is interesting to note that although all three of the projects, the N-12 Education Task Force, the Minister's Advisory Committee and the Downey paper, had different beginnings several of the key actors in

early childhood education in the province were directly or indirectly involved in all of these initiatives.

As the controversy over the establishment of universal preschool programs grew, a number of groups became involved in researching the pros and cons of this program. The Alberta School Trustee's Association commissioned the Alberta Human Resources Research Council to produce a feasibility study on 'An Integrated Approach to Early Childhood Education'. The principal investigator was Dr. Myer Horowitz, Chairman of Elementary Education, The University of Alberta and the report was published in November of 1971. Previous to this in July of 1971 the Early Childhood Education Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association had produced a position paper which presented the beliefs, goals and philosophy of the Early Childhood Education Council on the education of young children.

Basically all the information compiled in support of the implementation of kindergartens had common areas of agreement. They were:

a. an emphasis on early education;
b. the provision of alternative programs in early education;
c. coordination between early childhood education and the required grade one year;
d. coordination between early childhood education and outside agencies, e.g., Health and Welfare, Social Services, Public Health;

e. the preparation of professionals in the early childhood field;

f. government funding of programs;

g. parental involvement in programs;

h. an emphasis on parent and family education.

It is interesting to note that during the organizational period of policy formation on early childhood education there were varying views on the credibility of this type of program as a provincially funded option. During the early 1970's a major advocate of this program was Lou Hyndman, the then Minister of Education and a main opponent was Calgary School Trustee, Harald Gunderson, who was quoted as saying of Early Childhood Education: "We can't afford it and early schooling can harm young children" (Edmonton Journal, 1972:5).

A major political debate ensued and the idea of universal kindergartens across the province was rejected. A more unstructured approach was adopted still in keeping with the current theories on early childhood education. As was stated in the Edmonton Journal newspaper article of November 27, 1972, Mr. Hyndman indicated that:

> the provincial government will not give priority to introducing universal kindergarten education in Alberta, because of controversy as to its value...instead he says the government will concentrate on helping to reduce disparities affecting disabled or disadvantaged children. He also expressed more interest in less formalized programs to help enrich the environment of children in early years.

The government progressed in establishing early childhood education across the province by appointing a Minister's Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Education. Their recommendations set the groundwork for the initial guidelines and policies used to establish the Alberta Department of Education's Early Childhood Services Branch in 1973. It is important to note, for the purposes of this thesis, the initial policies or operational plans that were set out. They were:

1. Early Childhood Education is an important part, but only one part of a comprehensive system of Early Childhood Services (early childhood services).
2. Provincial and local organizations through which early childhood services are provided must encourage and maximize the involvement of parents and the community. Early childhood services must include the provision of such educational, nutritional, social and health services that will help young children.
3. Services offered by early childhood services need not develop simultaneously. Priorities must be set for phasing-in programs. For example, activities that meet the needs of handicapped children will take precedence over those activities involved in establishing universal early childhood programs. Initially, program development and support will be directed toward children from birth to less than 5 years 6 months and their parents. This will have strong implications for present primary school programs.
4. Every effort should be made to avoid unnecessary "labelling" of children and parents in early childhood services programs.
5. Early Childhood Services should not be viewed as an extension downward of the present primary program.
6. Early Childhood Services should be provided to the child and his family on an optional basis. No child under compulsory school age will be required to attend(Government of Alberta, 1973:i-ii).

Out of the Minister's Advisory Committee the Early Childhood Services Branch was formally established in the spring of 1973. It came under the auspices of the Department of Education and a Director of Early Childhood Services was appointed, Dr. Irving Hastings. The Program Planning Manual of the Alberta Department of Education suggested that the early childhood services program was established by the government for the following reasons:

1. The coordination at the provincial policy level of services offered by several departments of government to meet the needs of young children and their families.
2. The development and maintenance of needed services throughout the province.
3. The promotion of a coordinated approach to services for young children and their families and the encouragement of inter-agency cooperation among all local agencies which provide these services.
4. The provision of grants and consultative services to community groups and to school jurisdictions for the establishment and maintenance of comprehensive early childhood services programs(Alberta Education, 1985:iv).

As the documents outlined in this section of the Review of Literature reveal there were clear beliefs underlying the original guidelines and policies which were set forth for early childhood services programs in the province of Alberta. It is interesting to note that the majority of these beliefs still remain compatible with present day philosophies on early childhood education. However as kindergarten became an integral part of individual school boards and most importantly primary schools it began to operate within a system of paradoxes. On one hand it was deemed to be viewed "not as an extension downward of the

present primary programs" but on the other hand more demands were placed on the program to provide readiness skills, beginning reading skills, etc. to prepare the child for entry into grade one. The original principle also stressed that a positive self-concept and a feeling of success were to be fostered in the child's development and yet the issue of "retention" arises each June as the question of whether children should proceed onto grade one is raised. One last issue which poses various implications for kindergarten is the one presently being suggested by Alberta Education, termed "articulation". This will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter. However briefly, it should be noted that government agencies have strongly suggested that planning occur between kindergarten and grade one educators in respect to program and curriculum. The question this poses is will this cause kindergarten to loose some autonomy in program and planning areas and how directly will provincial curriculum concerns affect the direction the planning will go?

In summary many interesting points can be raised in respect to the initial development of early childhood services programs in 1973 and the degree to which this area has changed up to 1986. More emphasis will be placed on these various points in the following chapters of this thesis.

C. The Development and Role of Early Childhood Services Programs in the Edmonton Public School District

1970-1973

Prior to the establishment of the Early Childhood Services Branch in the province in 1973, the Edmonton Public School Board had supported parent cooperative kindergartens in their schools. If an adequate number of parents within a community grouped together to demonstrate their interest in and the need for a kindergarten then available space, i.e., classrooms in various schools was provided to them. Statistics show that as of 1971 the Edmonton Public School District had fourteen parent cooperative kindergarten classes in the schools with a total enrollment of six hundred and forty children (King, et al., 1972:4). It is important to note that these were autonomous, parent supported programs and, although the parent groups had a close liaison with school district personnel, they operated as a "separate" entity within the school itself.

At the same time as the parent cooperative kindergartens were functioning within schools, the Edmonton Public School Board itself entered into a separate agreement with the Department of Education to operate four kindergarten classrooms in three "inner-city" schools - two rooms at Delton and one each at North Edmonton and Oliver. This pilot study was set up to run in a similar manner to

the parent cooperative kindergartens

> but the provincial government was providing for the evaluation of them in order to determine the effectiveness and benefits of Early Childhood Education. In addition they provided $50,000.00 per year toward the cost of these kindergartens(Edmonton Public School District, 1971:2).

The programs were called Project Tenderness and began operation in the fall of 1970. The kindergartens within this jointly sponsored project had as their objectives:

1. to assess the social, physical, intellectual, cultural and emotional needs of the children when they enter and as they progress through school
2. to provide experiences appropriate to these needs whether they be of a compensatory nature for children from disadvantaged homes, or of an enrichment nature for children from the most advantaged homes in the city.
3. to provide a climate of trust, warmth, security, and understanding which will assist each child to create an attitude toward himself and others conducive to the development of a positive self concept.
4. to involve the child's parents, as well as other resource personnel, in the assessment of needs and in the determination of appropriate learning experiences.
5. to help the child's parents widen and enrich their own knowledge and understanding by contributing to and participating in the experiences provided by the school(Reid, 1970:1).

It is interesting to note that these four kindergarten classrooms were set up in somewhat ideal situations. All of the four classrooms were totally renovated and approximately $7,500.00 was budgeted to be spent on equipment and supplies. This was in stark contrast to the parent cooperative kindergartens which operated in any available classroom and whose equipment and supplies had to be purchased by the parent group. In addition to the two

previously mentioned types of kindergarten programs an action research project was also being coordinated by Eldon Bliss of the Edmonton Public School District. The project had input from the University of Alberta, the Social Planning Branch of the Alberta Department of Social Development and the Early Childhood Education Section of the Alberta Department of Education. This early childhood education program initiated in the early 1970's was "The Cooperative Early Childhood Education Project" and its two main objectives were:

1. to develop an individual learning approach to early childhood education in which the curriculum, teaching procedures, and school/classroom organization are congruent and in harmony with knowledge of child development; and
2. to develop close liaison, *articulation*, and unity of purpose among the school staff, home and community, the teacher training institution, and the support service of both the school district and the community regarding the total educational effort involved in the growth and development of the child up to the age of eight years(Krysowaty,1972:6)(emphasis added).

The Cooperative Early Childhood Education Project was located at Forest Heights School and was partially funded by the government as an innovative project. The project included grades 1,2, and 3. Its main purpose was to have these grades operate on the same philosophy and in the same manner as the kindergartens in the system. It is interesting to note that this type of integrated approach to early childhood education is the main principle behind the "articulation" philosophy currently being espoused by provincial educational personnel.

In summary then it may be seen then that by their involvement in the parent cooperative kindergartens, Project Tenderness and the Cooperative Early Childhood Education Project, the Edmonton Public School Board had in the early 1970's demonstrated a strong support of early childhood education programs.

1973 - 1980

At the provincial level there was however still no government department or subunit with the primary mandate for early childhood education. This situation was to change in 1973 when the then Minister of Education, Lou Hyndman, established the Early Childhood Services Branch within the Alberta Department of Education. This branch was the result of a number of pressures. First the previously mentioned Project Tenderness and a similar endeavor in Calgary, initiated as pilot projects by the provincial government, had been seen as successful. Second, there was parental pressure on the government to institute universal kindergartens within the province. There was also concern that these kindergartens be operated in a method consistent with accepted early childhood philosophies(for example the British Infant School). Third, at the same time, there were as outlined in section 1 of the Review of Literature a number of studies initiated by educational agencies to make recommendations about the future direction of early education programs within Alberta. Finally there was

pressure because Alberta was the last province to adopt a policy concerning early education. Once the Early Childhood Services Branch was established its intent was to improve the quality of these programs by providing adequate funding, a consistent early childhood philosophy, and supervision of the preschool experiences. However initial funding in 1973 was to programs already in existence and there were no monies allocated for new programs. This discrepancy between the intent of the government on the support of "universal" kindergartens and the funding that actually was given brought about a lobby by the 'Parent Cooperative Kindergartens of Greater Edmonton' to insure new kindergartens had a source of funding. Due to the increased public awareness of early childhood education and the persistence on the part of parents and educators, the Minister of Education, Lou Hyndman, announced on January 10, 1974, an expansion of Early Childhood Services to provide universal access for all children in the province aged 4 1/2 - 5 1/2 years. It was during this 1973-1974 period of transition that the Edmonton Public School District identified one of their personnel as 'Supervisor of Early Childhood Programs' to assist and coordinate the kindergarten programs within the system. The person given this mandate was Mrs. Kay Chernowski. Under her direction the early childhood programs grew from a group of autonomous, parent-initiated classes to an ordered, coordinated and cohesive operation. The major emphasis in

the ensuing years of development from 1973-1980 was on greater utilization of funds in respect to program planning, support staff, teacher inservicing, special needs programs and parent involvement. In this period the provincial government monies allocated for funding the early childhood programs existing in particular schools was not released to the school system themselves but to the individual early childhood programs. To eliminate the duplication of submitted proposals for funding, services, and the repetitive yearly reporting a coordinated effort was put in place by the Edmonton Public School District to administer and oversee the disbursement of early childhood services' funds to individual programs. The effectiveness of the effort was quickly recognized locally and by the provincial government. This arrangement entered into by the school board was given official approval when on December 15, 1975 The School Act was amended to give a school board the initial authority and the power to contract with incorporated local parent-community groups. Thus making a school board involved in this agreement "a school board operator". As outlined in a 1975 Edmonton Public School Board Early Childhood Program Directive from Mrs. Chernowski the aims and objectives of being a 'school board operator' were clearly stated:

1. to have a teacher whose attitude and behaviour indicate that she/he enjoys working with young children.
2. to have a teacher who accepts and appreciates each child as he/she is, a unique human being.
3. to have a teacher who understands the stages of

child development, how young children learn, and how children acquire language.
4. to have learning experiences that promote the child's total development, social, physical, intellectual, cultural, and emotional.
5. to have the child's parents respected as persons, welcomed, and involved in the school that he/she attends.
6. to have a principal who understands the implications of child development for school activities.
7. to have a learning environment in the home, in the school and in the community, that will support and encourage his/her growth and development(Chernowski,1975:1).

It is interesting to note that comparatively similar principles, appear in a recent May/June 1986 edition of Early Childhood Services, Program Highlights which features the topic of "articulation". In this publication reference is made to Dr. Kerri Pain's suggestions as to what articulated schools are. These suggestions appeared in the document "Articulation Linkages: Children and Parents in Early/Basic Education and were:

1. involve parents;
2. encourage teachers to communicate and plan jointly;
3. have principals who are visible and supportive;
4. emphasize development of individual children;
5. encourage interaction: children working together, helping one another;
6. use concrete and manipulative materials(Alberta Education,1986a:4).

To summarize this early period, 1973 - 1980, it was a time of growth for early childhood services programs within the Edmonton Public School District. As indicated in Table 2 a concentrated and effective network of support was designed to assist the teachers and children involved in these programs. The organization of this network was orchestrated

Table 2.
Organizational Framework for Support Services of Early Childhood Services Programs in Edmonton Public Schools (1975-1980)

Superintendent/Edmonton Public School District

Associate Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent

Director of Instruction

Supervisor, Early Childhood Programs

Social Worker	Early Childhood Services Consultants	Psychologists	Public Health Nurses	Speech Therapists
		Primary Consultants		

Early Childhood Services Programs and Teachers

by the Supervisor of Early Childhood Programs and was set up in such a way as to provide support for teachers and their students through visitations to classrooms, referral systems and inservicing. It is important to note that this support system was funded by the monies received to finance the early childhood services programs operating within the schools. The kindergartens, rapidly became an integral part of the schools, and enjoyed an autonomy and clear identity of their own. Students had the benefit of school facilities(gymnasiums, music rooms, library, etc.) and

teachers were part of a professional school staff where support could be obtained, but at the same time the goals and objectives of the early childhood services program could be nurtured and developed. In summary, some of the major or most significant achievements of the early childhood services programs in the Edmonton Public School District, during the period of 1973-1980, were:

1. The introduction of universal, early childhood services programs in the Edmonton Public School District.
2. The unique program which was developed around the five developmental areas of a child's experiences: social, physical, intellectual, cultural and emotional. Two program guides were written "A Trip With Us" and "Supplement to A Trip With Us".
3. The aim that every program should have a teacher aide to assist in the program.
4. The area of parental involvement was very important, parents were encouraged to acquire new skills and knowledge relative to early childhood education through parent inservices, parent-teacher conferences and classroom involvement.
5. The identification of children with special needs which led to the developmental kindergarten (which no longer exists), alternative early childhood services programs such as French, Ukranian, Cree, German and Chinese Bilingual.
6. Special government funding for early childhood services

children from "inner-city" schools or disadvantaged areas of the city.

7. The funding established for early childhood services children with mild, moderate or severe handicaps to enable these children to participate in these programs with appropriate supervision and care.
8. The emphasis on the involvement of community agencies and resources that could be utilized by the early childhood services children, parents, and staff, e.g., Local Board of Health, City Police(Block Parent Program), Alberta Social Services.
9. The coordination and emphasis on allocated inservice programs for early childhood personnel on a regular basis.
10. The provision of consultative services to early childhood services teaching staff, e.g., speech therapists, psychologists, early childhood services consultants.
11. The establishment of Local Advisory Committees(LAC) in each early childhood services program comprised of parents to assist in the development of program planning suited to the children's needs and the available resources of the community.

1980 - 1986

In 1981 the Edmonton Public School District underwent a major organizational change. The essence of this change was

to decentralize the budgeting process and introduce what is termed 'school based budgeting'. For the early childhood services programs, namely kindergartens, this was to have a significant effect on their funding. Prior to decentralization, funds for each kindergarten were allocated by the school board to that kindergarten. The kindergarten would then pay an amount proportional to its requirements to the school for services, e.g. heating, light, water, paper, etc. Under the new system the kindergarten funds were combined with the rest of the school funds and all this was allocated in one sum of money to the school. Essentially this meant that the kindergartens no longer controlled their own funds as they had in the past but now these were controlled by the school principal. Concurrent with this budgeting change there was also a change in the role of the Edmonton Public School District's Early Childhood Program Supervisor. In the past this individual had the sole task of dealing with kindergarten programs, under the new system the individual's role was expanded to include the responsibility of program planning for grades 1, 2 and 3. This type of change in organizational responsibilities was indicative of the future direction the Edmonton Public School District would take in regard to kindergartens, i.e., an "articulated" program.

To summarize as a result of this shift in organization there has been a number of changes over the past four to five years that have had a further effect on the

kindergarten program. First, supplies and materials for the kindergarten are no longer the concern of a central supervisor, now these requirements are incorporated into the general supplies and materials for the school and are the responsibility of the school principal. Second, the consultative services, e.g., psychologists, speech therapists, etc., that were previously provided solely for kindergarten programs have been incorporated by the "bureau team", a centralized service for all schools. Third, this shift has meant that rather than trained early childhood specialists being responsible for these programs they now fall under the jurisdiction of a principal who often has little or no formal training in this area. Finally, this has been another step in the move by the Edmonton Public School District to view and incorporate kindergarten as a formal year of schooling.

D. Perceptions and Implications of Early Childhood Services

- Primary Articulation for Early Childhood Services Programs

When Early Childhood Services was established in 1973 there was a clear directive from the Department of Education that there be a number of 'alternative' programs of early education available as the need arose. What arose as a result of this were a number of early childhood services programs such as nursery schools, playschools, daycares, private early childhood services societies, school board

operated early childhood services programs, modified Grade Ones, and kindergarten/ Grade One split classes. However, although the intent of 'alternative' programs was well-directed the outcome has been a disparity of philosophies and goals among the numerous 'early childhood' centres. There indeed arose a need to assess the direction the early childhood services programs were going and to ascertain from the findings the appropriate course of action. As Alberta Education had primary responsibility for early childhood services and primary programs the main emphasis or thrust for a more coordinated plan was to originate with them. Their major goal was to provide a continuum of well coordinated, sequential, interactive, and "articulated" program planning across the early childhood spectrum(0-8 years). One area specifically identified in need of reorganization was the government's need to define clear lines of funding particularly in regard to program planning.

Beginning in 1982 there were three significant events which led to the recent endorsement of an "articulation policy" in the province. The first involved an Early Childhood Services Policy Advisory Council which was appointed by the Minister of Education in the fall of 1982. The major focus of this committee was to concentrate "on providing policy and procedural advice on improving communication and coordination among all programs for children (0-8 years)"(Torgunrud,1985-86:5). In respect to

this the committee gave special attention to "monitoring the development of policy for the proposed articulation of early childhood services and primary education" (Torgunrud, 1985-86:5). The second event was the reorganization of Alberta Education in January 1983. Early childhood services - primary articulation was identified as a priority and, through the department, policy on this was to be recommended to the Minister and government. A third and most significant event in respect to one of the initial 1973 policies is the fact that:

> on May 17, 1984, Mrs. Myrna Fyfe, MLA for St. Albert, tabled the following motion in the Alberta legislature: "Be it resolved that the government consider the upward integration of Early Childhood Services with Grade 1". The debate, begun on that occasion, was concluded and the motion carried on November 8, 1984(Torgunrud, 1985-86:5).

Due to these circumstances the government's attention turned to the proposed "articulation policy" and two studies were commissioned by Alberta Education and their findings have been distributed to early childhood services personnel across the province. These studies, Articulation Linkages: Children and Parents in Early/Basic Education and Human Development:The Early Years have been used to assist in the development of the proposed articulation policy. The one study, Articulation Linkages: Children and Parents in Early/Basic Education collected information, on the perceived objectives of articulation, by visiting public and private institutions where successful articulation programs were in practice and also by visiting those where the

potential for articulation was evident but was not in place. Parental involvement was identified as a significant area from which information was gathered through observation and interview techniques. The initiator of this study was Dr. E.A.Torgunrud, who at the time was Director of Early Childhood Services for Alberta Education. Dr. Torgunrud was seconded to Lac La Biche in 1986 and the 'articulation project' has been continued by Marianne Berube, Acting Associate Director of the Early Childhood Services Branch, Keith Wagner, Associate Director responsible for elementary education in the Curriculum Branch and David Jeffares, Acting Director, Early Childhood Services. The second study, Human Development: The Early Years(1984) focussed on a review of current literature pertaining to the developmental growth of young children.

The findings of these two commissioned studies were distributed provincially to various interested groups and individuals such as The Early Childhood Education Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association, The Director of Early Childhood Services, The Early Childhood Services Policy Advisory Council, the early childhood services supervisors of large and small group systems, the Alberta Education Articulation Steering Committee, school superintendents and trustees for feedback and review. The distribution took the form of five discussion papers, written by E.A. Torgunrud and entitled Prospectus(1985), which were debated by the various agencies previously mentioned throughout 1985. The

Early Childhood Services and Curriculum Branches of the Program Development Division, Alberta Education, in consultation with the Policy Advisory Council were responsible for collaborating on the acquired reactions towards the "articulation" of early childhood services programs and primary education and devising an initial version of policy, guidelines and procedures. From that initial translation of the findings in early January 1986 to the present June 1986 there have been a total of five revised drafts defining the policy, guidelines and procedures for early childhood services programs and primary education articulation.

At the present time, i.e., June 1986 the Department of Education is defining articulation as:

> a process which ensures continuity in the learning experiences of children accomplished through ongoing cooperative development, implementation and evaluation of early childhood services and primary education programs by **instructional staff**, e.g. teachers, aides,...,**program administrators**, e.g., principals, supervisors, coordinators,..., **parents** and, **community resource persons**, e.g., public health nurses, librarians, ... in keeping with the principles of child development(Alberta Education, 1986b).

It is interesting to note, for the purposes of this thesis, the implications which may arise for early childhood services programs as a result of early childhood services programs and primary education articulation. At a recent May 7, 1986 "articulation" inservice session attended by the researcher and presented by the early childhood services consultants of the Edmonton Public School District the

following concerns or issues were presented. These concerns were the underlying issues which contributed to the initiation of this policy as a mandate from Alberta Education. Some of the main issues in a condensed version were:

1. the advancement of children from program to program, namely early childhood services programs into Grade 1, from Grade 1 into Grade 2, and so on;
2. the ease of transition from program to program;
3. the child's feeling of non-success which contributes to academic and emotional problems;
4. the present entry age deadline to early childhood services programs of March 1;
5. the retention rate of early childhood services programs' children - what is to be done with children who cannot be put forward;
6. the developing of readiness skills in early childhood services programs' students in preparation for Grade 1;
7. beginning academic programs earlier and earlier in a child's life;
8. the emphasis put on students achieving higher test results.

In comparison Alberta Education(1986) made the following statement concerning the current status of the programs in their draft on Policy, Guidelines and Procedures for Early Childhood Services and Primary Education Articulation.

> Early childhood services and primary education programs range from unstructured, activity-based and

> integrated learning experiences to more structured, teacher-directed and subject-bound classroom activities. Instructional objectives and practices, evaluation of program outcomes and children's progress, program administration and the involvement of parents and community are not always articulated. Consequently, children may experience a variety of adjustment factors which hinder their learning progress as they proceed from early childhood services programs into Grade 1, from Grade 1 into Grade 2 or from Grade 2 into Grade 3.

For the purposes of this research it is important to note the significant mandate the provincial Department of Education has set for itself in terms of the "articulation policy". More importantly though will be the perceptions of those involved in early childhood education as to the far-reaching effects this will have on this area of early education. Some possible areas which will have to be considered are in terms of the following:

1. the early childhood services programs teacher's perceptions of their role in articulation;
2. the implications of program planning between early childhood services programs and Grade 1;
3. the direction that instructional methods will follow to ensure the basic philosophies of early childhood services programs;
4. the methods used to evaluate a child's progress in early childhood services programs, Grade 1, and so on;
5. the emphasis on parental involvement;
6. program administration, i.e., principals, supervisors.

As a final point, the following quote from the Early Childhood Services and Primary Education Articulation,

Policy, Guidelines and Procedures, Overview (March, 1986) states:

> ...the concept of articulation has moved from voluntary implementation to mandatory implementation. As of September, 1986, school boards, private schools and private early childhood services operators are expected to begin the development of policies, guidelines, and procedures to use in their implementation of the articulation policy. This development is to be completed by September 1987 so that implementation may be monitored and evaluated in 1987-88(Alberta Education,1986c).

From this point on then it will be most interesting to observe the changes that may arise from articulation and to see whether this policy will bring early childhood services programs(Kindergarten) that one step closer to becoming a mandatory grade of school.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction

The purpose of this study as previously mentioned was:

1. to investigate the opinions of selected school administrators about major events in the development of early childhood services programs,
2. to investigate the opinions of selected school administrators about the present organization and possible incorporation of kindergartens as a required part of the educational system,
3. to explain what these school administrators see as some of the advantages and disadvantages of this possible incorporation.

As the Review of Literature has shown there is a dearth of research materials that deal directly with either of these two issues. Consequently the nature of this study would be what Burton(1981:10) terms "exploratory and indicative" rather than "definitive and representative". That is to say that the study would explore the opinions of selected school administrators about the integration of the kindergarten year into the formally designated school years; it would also attempt to indicate the range and types of issues which emanate from these opinions. The study would not attempt to define particular variables emanating from the administrator's opinions nor would it attempt to

determine the representativeness of these variables among all school administrators. This type of approach was seen as being necessary in order to lay the groundwork for the development of concepts that may later form theoretical linkages which in turn could be empirically tested. Babbie has emphasized the importance of using this type of approach in work that is relatively new and as yet undefined. He points out

> A great deal of social research is conducted to explore a topic, to provide a beginning familiarity with that topic. This purpose is typical when a researcher is examining a new interest or when the subject of study is itself relatively new or unstudied(1975,85).

Babbie(1979:85) also suggests that exploratory studies are most typically done for three reasons all of which have relevance for this research. First, he suggests, exploratory studies are done "simply to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding". As an early childhood teacher for approximately ten years the researcher conducting this study had developed an interest and curiosity about some of the seeming contradictions surrounding the kindergarten year. Babbie's second reason for exploratory studies "to test the feasibility of undertaking a more careful study" also is relevant. While there is no planned followup study to this work it is hoped that the interview data will reveal concepts that when linked with those from other studies (cf. Torgunrud, 1985) will be usable in a more theoretically and empirically rigorous study. Finally the study may in Babbie's terms help

"develop the methods to be employed in a more careful study". For example the interview questions developed for this study may, depending on the data they elicit, be used as is or in a modified form for a questionnaire survey type study where a large sample could be drawn and consequently more generalizable results obtained.

In order to undertake an approach of the nature deemed feasible for this study the research method selected had to facilitate the collection of data that would provide the necessary range and variety of types of concepts to form a basis for further theoretical and empirical investigations. Consequently of the three major research methods, used in educational administration, the case study, the experiment, and the survey the latter was seen as being the most appropriate.

B. Research Method and Data Gathering Technique

As Babbie(1979:315) points out

> Surveys may be used for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes. They are chiefly used in studies that have individual people as the units of analysis.

As a result of this study being descriptive and exploratory and the fact that individuals were the unit of analysis the survey was seen as an appropriate research method. There are essentially two main data gathering techniques that are used in survey research, the questionnaire and the interview. Although both techniques have advantages and disadvantages, the interview was seen as

the most appropriate for this study. There are several reasons as to why the interview was seen as being the most suitable. First because the study was to be exploratory in nature it was felt that the interview would provide "a richness of data" which could not be elicited using a questionnaire. That is to say, the interview would allow the interviewer to probe and explore statements about the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating the kindergarten year as a required part of the educational system. The second reason for selecting the interview was that it almost always provides fewer incomplete answers than a questionnaire(cf.Babbie, 1979). This was an important factor in this study as again due to its exploratory nature it was important to get opinions on all possible advantages and disadvantages of incorporating the kindergarten year. Finally, the interview was seen as a more appropriate data gathering technique since it provided a more personal encounter situation than the questionnaire. As a result of the fact that the researcher had been involved in the kindergarten area for a number of years and personally knew the potential respondents it was felt that the interview would allow her to capitalize on these established relationships. That is to say that, the familiarity the interviewer had with the interviewees, was such that she was able to establish the type of rapport that would more easily facilitate obtaining information. It was felt that a questionnaire due to its impersonal nature would not allow

this same type of interchange. As a result of these three factors: the richness of data that could be obtained, the lesser chance of incomplete responses and the interviewer's relationship to a number of the interviewees the interview was seen as the most appropriate data gathering technique.

Moser and Kalton(1972:270) suggest that interviews take various forms that range between the highly formal approach used in large scale surveys and a number of variants of informal approaches to interviewing. Madge(1965:165-195) classifies these informal approaches into four areas, the non-directive interview, the focused interview, life histories and the informal interview. Of these four types one of the most frequently used and the one seen as most appropriate for this study was the focused interview.

C. The Focused Interview

Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1956) suggest four ways in which the focused interview is different and consequently maybe more appropriate in some studies than other types of interviews. First in the focused interview the people being interviewed "are known to have been involved in a particular situation", second significant aspects of the topic under study are seen to have undergone prior analysis by the researcher, third an interview guide is prepared and finally the interview is constructed so as to focus on "the subjective experiences of persons exposed to the pre-analyzed situation in an effort to ascertain their

definition of the situation".

In this study all four of the basic characteristics were seen to pertain to the research, consequently the focused interview was seen as an appropriate data gathering technique. The first characteristic was facilitated by the fact that all the interviewees had been involved in an administrative capacity in the delivery of early childhood services programs. The second characteristic was fulfilled by the fact that the researcher had been involved with Kindergarten programs for a number of years as a teacher, program planner and advisory board member. These positions along with the writing of papers in preparation for this study were deemed to be sufficient to allow the researcher to claim some prior analysis of the situation under study. The third characteristic, the interview guide, was prepared based on the insights gained from the experiences outlined above and the review of literature. The interview guide is included in this chapter and in the appendices of this study. The final characteristic that Merton et al. referred to was the fact that the interview focuses on "the subjective experiences of the persons exposed to the pre-analyzed situation in an effort to ascertain their definition of the situation". Since the research focused on people involved in early childhood services programs (the prior analyzed situation) and it attempted to ascertain their definition about the intergration on one aspect of this program, Kindergarten, into the school years it was

seen as fulfilling the fourth criteria.

As a result of the fact that the situation under study appeared to fulfill the criteria for using the focused interview and the fact that the focused interview would allow the type of flexibility needed for this exploratory research, it was the data gathering technique selected for this study.

D. Development of the Interview Schedule

Once it had been determined that the data for the study should be collected through the use of a focused interview, the next step was the construction of the interview schedule. The initial consideration in developing the interview schedule was what topics should be addressed. The topics for the schedule essentially came from three sources. First, topic areas were extracted from the discussion of school board operated versus privately operated kindergartens in Chapter 1. Second, topics came from the review of literature found in Chapter 2 and finally the topics came from the researcher's own extensive background as an early childhood teacher.

All topic areas that were generated from these three areas were written on a piece of paper. The topic areas were then consolidated under the following generic headings.

1. Interviewee's knowledge about the history and development of the early childhood services programs in Alberta.

2. Interviewee's background and involvement with an early childhood services program.
3. Present organization and implications of Kindergarten operation.
4. Areas of concern in school board operated vis a vis privately operated Kindergartens.
   a. Facilities
   b. Teacher Benefits
   c. Student Benefits
   d. Program Needs
   e. Support Staff
   f. Administration
   g. Salaries

Once arranged under these headings, questions were generated for each topic area; several questions were generated for each area. Following the intent of the focused interview the questions that were generated were open ended questions. As Babbie(1973:140-141) points out in open ended questions "the respondent is asked to provide his (sic) own answers to the question". Because of the nature of this research, i.e. "exploratory and indicative", this was perceived as a better approach than using closed ended questions where the respondent must select one response from a predetermined list. In the wording of the questions every attempt was made to follow Babbie's (1973) guidelines about question construction. That is to say questions were written in clear and unambiguous terms,'double-barrelled questions

were avoided and the questions were relevant to the respondent's area of expertise. An attempt was also made to keep questions short and negative question items were avoided.

Once the questions had been generated they were then placed in a suitable order to ask(See interview schedule later in this chapter). Essentially in this case that meant that the less demanding questions were placed first. Crano and Brewer(1973:186) suggest

> It is generally the case that the less threatening, least demanding, most general and easily answered questions are presented initially. Later, once cooperation has been assured and the confidence of the respondent in the integrity of the interviewer is well established more difficult, specific, private and/or personal information may be requested.

In this interview schedule this meant that questions about the interviewee's background and involvement in early childhood services programs were asked earlier on in the interview, the more controversial questions about the advantages and disadvantages of the two types of kindergartens were left to later. It should be noted however that the nature of a focused interview is semi-structured and freedom was given to the interviewees to talk about items they felt were relevant. That is to say that although the interviewer will introduce the initial questions if the interviewee moves to other topic areas included in the interview schedule they will be allowed to pursue those areas. The interviewer will however ensure, by bringing interviewees "back on stream", that all the questions on the

schedule are addressed. This type of approach is the essence of the focused interview and as such provides the richness of data needed for this type of study.

E. The Pilot Test of The Interview Schedule

Once the interview schedule had been developed it was pilot tested. A pilot test was deemed necessary to determine the suitability and comprehensiveness of the interview schedule. The pilot test was conducted with three early childhood education administrators from the Edmonton area, who were not to be part of the study's main sample. Based on the results of the pilot study minor modifications, additions and deletions were made to the interview schedule.

F. The Interview Schedule

1. Interviewee's Knowledge about the History and Development of the Early Childhood Services Programs in Alberta.

   a. Could you tell me what you know about the history and development of the early childhood services programs in the province of Alberta, for example, how they were formed, who were the key figures in their inception, and what were the initial guidelines set out for the establishment of these programs?

   b. Early childhood services programs in the province have supported kindergarten programs for the 4 1/2 -

'5 1/2 year olds. Could you tell me what you know about the organization of these programs, for example, who operates them, where they are set up, the programs they offer and who teaches them.

c. In your opinion what are some of the major goals and objectives set out by the Dept. of Ed., Alberta Education, for Kindergarten programs?

d. Have there been changes in these goals and objectives? How have these changes affected the program?

2. Interviewee's background and involvement with an Early Childhood Services Program.

a. Could you tell me about your involvement with early childhood services programs, i.e. when you were involved, the duration of your involvement, the role you performed and how or if you are currently involved.

b. Did you feel you had a decision-making role? What decisions were you responsible for making?

c. During your involvement what were some of the major events you saw in the development of the Kindergarten program?

d. What are some of the major changes you have seen in Kindergarten programs?

e. How have these changes affected the Kindergartens and the people involved in them?

3. Present organization and implications of Kindergarten

operation.

a. There are two types of kindergarten operators in the province - school board and private. What is your knowledge about these two operators and how they exist in the province?

b. In your opinion, is there a need for two operators in the province. If not, who do you feel should operate kindergarten programs in the province?

c. At present kindergarten attendance is voluntary. Do you feel it should be mandatory? If so, why? If not, why?

4. Areas of concern in school board operated vis a vis privately operated kindergartens.

a. Teacher Benefits

1) In your opinion what criteria should be used when selecting a kindergarten teacher?

2) Do you feel it is beneficial for a kindergarten teacher to be an integral part of the school or to remain autonomous?

3) In your opinion what benefits do you feel a teacher gains from teaching for a school board operated program as opposed to a private operated program? Or the reverse?

4) If we see kindergarten become "mandatory" in what direction do you see the training of early childhood specialists going? Should there still be regulations governing those who are able to

teach this program?

5) Although kindergarten is not a required grade of school, the Department of Education is considering mandatory K-3 articulation planning for school boards. What implications do you see for kindergarten teachers posed by the situation of articulation planning?

b. Facilities

1) How important are facilities in the delivery of early childhood programs?

2) Across the system do you feel there are disparities between facilities and the programs which are able to operate in them?

3) What advantages or disadvantages do you see to kindergartens operating in schools?

4) When do you feel there should be class size restrictions in respect to facilities, program needs and student benefits?

c. Student Benefits

1) In your opinion, what benefits does a child gain by attending kindergarten? How important is it for the child to attend?

2) Do you feel there are benefits to the child who attends a school board operated program as opposed to the privately operated programs? In what respects?

3) In school board operated programs the issue of

"retention" is raised. Do you feel a child should be retained in a kindergarten program and under what circumstances?

4) At present in the Edmonton Public Schools there are K/1 split classes. Do you see this as an appropriate placement for students in the kindergarten program?

5) There appears to be disparities amongst the teaching practices of kindergarten teachers, i.e. centres opposed to seatwork, structured as opposed to unstructured, downward projection of Grade One curriculum. Do you see this as a problem? How could it be rectified?

d. Program Needs

1) Through your involvement with kindergarten programs do you feel there is a need for more direction and guidelines in respect to the teaching of these programs, i.e. uniformity of teaching styles(centres), a provincial kindergarten curriculum, etc.?

2) The Department of Education is introducing the concept of "articulation" in Alberta schools in 1985-1986. Could you please tell me what you understand "articulation"to be?

3) Articulation may become mandatory for K-3 throughout the province. What implications does this have for kindergarten?

4) In your opinion do you feel it is advantageous for kindergarten to be involved in the program planning of grades 1, 2 and 3?

5) Could you please list what you feel are important components of a successful kindergarten program?

6) Do you feel the kindergarten program should remain autonomous in its objectives or become integrated into the school curriculum?

e. Support Staff

1) Could you tell me what type of support staff are available to all kindergarten programs operating in the Edmonton Public School District? i.e. psychologists, speech therapists, etc. Is there any cost incurred by the individual school or program for their services?

2) In your opinion have there been any significant changes in the organization of support staff for kindergartens, i.e. additions, deletions of personnel. How have these changes affected the overall program?

3) As far as you are aware are teacher aides an integral part of every early childhood program? How do they benefit the program? How should they be used in the program?

4) Which factors do you feel account for an individual school acquiring a teacher aide for

the kindergarten program?

5) Do you think kindergarten teacher aides should have special early childhood training in order to assist in kindergarten programs?

6) What role do you see parents playing in the support and development of kindergarten programs?

7) Do you feel there is still the same emphasis placed on parent groups (LAC) to participate in planning areas of the kindergarten programs?

f. Administration

1) Could you tell me what you know about the development of the administration of the early childhood services programs in the Edmonton Public School District?

2) What are some of the most important changes in the administration of these kindergarten programs?

3) How have these changes affected the overall concept of the early childhood services programs?

4) Do you feel there is the same emphasis put on the quality and coordination of early childhood services programs as there was at the inception in 1973?

5) How do budgetary decisions at the school level affect the kindergarten programs?

6) Do you feel there are provisions made for each school kindergarten program to operate from the same base, i.e. equipment, materials, facilities, support staff. If there are discrepancies why do they exist?

g. Salaries and Benefits

1) There is a difference between the salaries of school board operated kindergarten teachers and private operated kindergarten teachers in the province.

2) What do you feel are some of the key reasons for the difference in salaries between school board operated teachers and private operated teachers?

3) How do you feel these differences in salary may affect the quality of staff and programs in school board operated programs and privately operated programs?

4) What other benefits do you see a teacher gaining by working for a school board operated program in terms of wage, benefits, professional affiliations, etc.?

G. Selection of the Interview Sample

The sample used for the data collection came from selected school administrators involved with early childhood services programs in the Edmonton Public School District. The type of sampling method used was a nonprobability sample

and comprised what Babbie(1973:106) calls a purposive or judgemental sample. This is where the researcher

> selects his sample on the basis of his own knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of his research aims(Babbie, 1973:106).

This was seen as an appropriate method of selecting a sample as the researcher wanted to ensure individuals who were most knowledgable and experienced about early childhood services programs. This depth of knowledge and experience was necessary as the study was essentially exploratory in nature. A probability type sample would not have yielded this type of individual. The interviewees were selected by the researcher through her knowledge of the key actors in the early childhood services programs, from recommendations by university faculty members familiar with the area and by recommendations from the interviewees themselves. In total seven interviews were conducted.They ranged in length from one and a half to two and a half hours.

H. Treatment and Analysis of the Data

Each of the interviews was transcribed following the meeting with the interviewee. The data obtained was analyzed using content analysis. Essentially there are two types of content analysis. Babbie(1979:240) calls these latent content analysis and manifest content analysis. Manifest content analysis is more suitable to use with standardized questionnaires as it involves counts of words, phrases, etc. that are relevant to the study. Manifest content analysis is

high in reliability but low on validity.

Latent content analysis on the other hand is concerned with textual analysis and identifying major themes, thrusts or opinions. It is highly valid and attempts to get at the true meaning of issues related to the phenomenon under study. Since the nature of this research was exploratory and its purpose was to solicit opinions and meanings related to issues, latent content analysis was seen as the most appropriate.

After the interviews were transcribed they were xeroxed. One copy was kept intact, the second copy was cut up so that interviewee's responses about a certain topic could be grouped together. The grouped data were then used in the writing of the results and discussion.

Chapter IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Introduction

The purpose of this section of the thesis is to report the results of the interviews and to present the analysis and discussion of these data. The results and discussion will be presented in the following order.

1. The development of early childhood services programs in the Edmonton Public School District.
2. The present organization of kindergartens within the province and the situation surrounding their possible incorporation as a required part of the provincial educational system.
3. The advantages and disadvantages of the incorporation of kindergarten as a required part of the educational system. Specifically the following areas will be examined.
   a. Teacher Benefits
   b. Facilities
   c. Student Benefits
   d. Program Needs
   e. Support Staff
   f. Administration
   g. Salaries and Benefits

However, before presenting the analysis of the data a brief

description of the interviewees will be presented.

B. The Interviewees Selected for the Study

As was pointed out in Chapter three seven individuals were selected to be interviewed for this study. Although each of the individuals had followed different career paths there were a number of commonalities in the backgrounds of the respondents that are worthy of mention. First, each of the interviewees had at one time or another been an early childhood teacher, and all had been or were currently involved in a consultant/supervisory position with early childhood programs. Six of the seven had been elementary principals in schools with school board operated kindergartens. All of the interviewees had been extensively involved in professional activities with early childhood programs, e.g. running clinics, workshops, working with parent groups, preparing materials, writing papers, etc. Several had worked in the early childhood area with the provincial government and/or the university and some had graduate training in this area. All of the interviewees used in this study were females.

It was felt that the sample contained the key actors in early childhood education in the Edmonton area. The sample through their involvement, also spanned the last fifteen years which was the major epoch in the development of early childhood programs in the province.

C. The Development of Early Childhood Services Programs in the Edmonton Public School District

The major events in the development of early childhood service programs in Alberta and more specifically in the Edmonton Public School District have already been outlined in Chapter three. The purpose of this particular section of the study is therefore, not a reiteration of this material, nor is it to provide a detailed history of the development of early childhood service programs. Rather it will serve to supplement the factual material already presented, by outlining what the interviewees saw as some of the major issues in the development of early childhood service programs. This will be accomplished by a presentation and analysis of the points highlighted by the interviewees, specifically, their opinions about issues and trends that do not appear in the formally documented material concerned with the inception and development of early childhood service programs.

The first point, which was stressed by all interviewees, relates to the involvement of parents in the initial development of universal kindergartens. As was pointed out in Chapter three prior to the establishment of universal kindergartens in the province there existed a number of parent cooperative kindergartens. These were programs which were initiated by groups of parents within a community who demonstrated an interest in creating a kindergarten. However, this type of system brought with it

some inherent problems. The parent cooperative kindergartens were paid for by the parents of the children who attended them; the cost of furniture, room rentals, and teacher's salaries were all borne by these individuals. What this type of system meant was that those children whose parents could afford to pay for this type of experience gained an educational advantage over those children whose parents did not possess similar economic resources. This type of advantage coupled with the cultural capital usually inherent in children from the upper socioeconomic strata meant that inequalities were being created in the educational system. As one interviwee pointed out:

> The programs that were in existence were organized by parents who were able to organize a program, able to hire a teacher, had the money to pay for it and all the other children... were going to no program because their parents were unable to organize it and couldn't afford it.

As a result of the creation of this type of inequality within the system and the desire by parents for universal kindergarten the provincial government was faced with a strong parental lobby. As another respondent noted:

> The focus was pretty much for children who were arriving deficit(sic) because of economic circumstances...so the province began looking at introducing early childhood programming through the (Provincial) Department of Education.

The parent lobby along with an increasing awareness among educators of the importance of preschool experiences resulted in 1973 with the creation by the provincial government of the Early Childhood Services Branch of the Alberta Department of Education. An Edmonton Public School

Board memorandum from this period emphasizes the importance of catering to children from the lower socioeconomic strata when it pointed out that:

> The government's paper (on Operational Plans for Early Childhood Services) states that the programs to meet the needs to two categories of children - "the handicapped" and "the socially disadvantaged" - are its first consideration (Memorandum, E.P.S.D., April 19, 1973).

The memorandum goes on to say that the Edmonton Public School District agreed with the basic principles outlined in the government's paper.

However, despite the government's apparent committment to helping "socially disadvantaged" children, when it started to allocate monies for kindergartens these were only allocated to already existing kindergartens. Thus, the government by their actions were helping to perpetuate and heighten the class based inequalities that were already present in the education of kindergarten age children. As a 1973 memorandum of a meeting between the Minister of Education and the Parent Cooperatives of Greater Edmonton points out, the problem started in the biased assessment by the government of what was needed. They suggested;

> supporters of universal kindergartens have been callously branded as unenlightened people who seek nothing more than free baby-sitting services, or people who confuse pre-school programs as a lower form of elementary education to be preparatory to grade one skills in reading, writing and reasoning (Memorandum(mimeographed) April 17, 1973).

As a result of these concerns over the universality of kindergartens a large lobby was organized by parents, within the Edmonton Public School District. The purpose of this

lobby was to ensure that new kindergartens were also able to obtain money. Due to this parental lobby and others within the province and the strong support of key educators the expansion of early childhood services programs was announced in January, 1974.

Under the new funding system Kay Chernowski, Edmonton Public School District's Early Childhood Services Director, organized parents to have the money for kindergartens allocated to the school board. The school board in turn provided for (the kindergartens) whatever the money could buy - teacher materials, curriculum, teacher aides, and would provide for them whatever space they could in schools that had space and in those that didn't portables were moved in and utilized. As pointed out in Chapter three the usefulness of this type of arrangement was quickly recognized. Consequently in December, 1975 the arrangement was given official approval. The School Act was ammended to give a school board the initial authority and power to contract with local parent-community groups and consequently school board operated kindergartens were born.

What the bringing of kindergartens under the jurisdiction of the school boards did was to begin a process of rationalization for these organizations. The concept of rationalization emanates from the sociology of Max Weber but has come to be incorporated into the writings of many organizational theorists. Essentially the process of rationalization means that the organizations are consciously

designed according to rational principles, the purpose being to maximize productive efficiency. What this meant for kindergartens was that the process of rationalization would make their future more stable. However this was achieved at the expense of some autonomy as school boards could now exercise some control over them. This in essence then was the start of the de facto incorporation of kindergarten as a part of the school system although as this thesis has laid out there are still in existence a number of privately operated kindergartens, not under the school board's jurisdiction.

The rationalization of the kindergarten program did at that time (and still does) mean changes for all aspects of the program. When any two organization merge which is what essentially happened here a process of mutual integration is involved and a number of organizational changes and trade-offs have to occur to bring previous modes of operation into line. One interviewee, commented about the change period from private operation to school board operation:

> I really noticed a difference between the year of operating strictly funded by the parents and having them involved right from the hiring of the teacher, right up to being involved in what we were using on a daily basis and helping with program development, we lost some of our autonomy. It was a trade-off for the funding that all of a sudden we had all these restrictions to meet.

What she was alluding to was the dilemma that faced kindergartens who while they wanted to obtain government funding did not want to be overly burdened with

"bureaucratic red tape". Elaborating on her earlier point she stated:

> We found we had to write down things long before we needed to write them down. We had to make program plans before we met the children, which was always ludicrous to me as we always had to change them when the children walked through the door. We had to justify a lot of things we knew full well were good decisions. We had to legitimize things that just happened naturally, that just happened as a flow of developing good programming for children. I remember much time being spent writing and rewriting things because sometimes the way you put things down was not the same way that people read them and then came the phone call saying or a letter saying that the letter was unacceptable so you had to redo it. So we lost a lot of autonomy.

What these kindergartens were seeing then were manifestations of this rationalization, increased formalization of procedures, the initiation of rational planning systems etc. While these may all have eventually benefited the kindergartens they were problematic at this time because they were an encroachment on autonomy. As pointed out in Chapter three the rationalization of kindergarten programs has continued in various ways until the present. There have been both positive and negative ramifications. The current proposal to articulate kindergarten with the grade one to grade three years of school is both a part of this process of rationalization and an action that will give it a further push. As with the situation in the early years of school board operated programs there will be both positive and negative consequences of a <u>de jure</u> incorporation of kindergarten into the school system. Some of these advantages and

disadvantages will be outlined later in this chapter.

Before leaving the history of the development of Early Childhood Services Programs in the Edmonton Public School District it is important to point out that school board operated kindergartens have not only been influenced by the school boards, as one interviewee previously outlined. In addition all interviewees pointed to at least two major ways in which kindergartens had influenced other grade levels of school. This is an expected situation which arises when two organizations come together for some reason, both will be influenced by the previous operating patterns of the other.

In terms of the kindergartens influence on other grade levels of school the first factor is the "whole child" approach to teaching commonly used in kindergartens. This type of approach, developed through play and centres of learning, focuses on enhancing a child's five major developmental areas, i.e. social, physical, intellectual, cultural, and emotional (SPICE). In short it is concerned with the development of the whole child. Several of the interviewees felt the rationale behind this type of approach had spread to other levels of schooling. As an interviewee pointed out:

> the wholistic nature of the child is I think another aspect of early childhood services that has spread...the SPICE checklist...It has endured (since the inception of kindergartens) and spread beyond and up the levels of school.

Two other interviewees echoed these sentiments when they noted "there has been an extension of that philosophy

(SPICE) upwards" and "I think people have maintained these ideas with a view to translating them throughout the school system." This was seen by all as a positive inclusion for other grades of school and something that may increase if kindergartens were formally incorporated into the school system.

The second area that was seen as emanating from the kindergarten philosophy was the emphasis on parental involvement in the child's program. As was pointed out:

> we have seen a push from parents to be involved at a grade one level and grade two and on as their child moves up, because they find it not only satisfying to the child and parent but also informing to the parent. They get to know much more about what education is, what teachers are trying to do and they can support the program.

Again this type of sentiment was reiterated by several interviewees and again it was seen as a possible area that would develop even more with the incorporation of kindergartens.

In summary then what this section of the results and discussion has done is outline some of the interviewee's perceptions about the development of kindergartens in the Edmonton Public School District. It was generally felt that parental lobbies played a large part in the creation of school board operated kindergartens. These lobbies were in large part the result of inequalities of opportunity being created in the initial funding patterns for kindergartens. The creation of school board operated programs meant that kindergartens started to become more rationalized. This had

both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side was the acquisition of needed funds; but on the negative side was a loss of autonomy for kindergarten programs. Finally the interviewees saw that as kindergartens developed they not only were influenced by other levels of school but they in turn also influenced the higher levels. This influence was manifest in two ways - the adoption of the concept of the education of the whole child and the emphasis on parental involvement in the higher school levels.

D. The Present Organization of Kindergartens Within the Province and Their Possible Incorporation into the Provincial Educational System

At the present time within the province of Alberta there are two types of kindergarten operators, school board and private. As was outlined in Chapter One there are a number of advantages and disadvantages to this type of system, the interviewees' perceptions of these will be outlined in the final section of the Results and Discussion. However, first, this section will present information on two areas related to the present organization and possible incorporation of kindergarten as a required part of the provincial educational system. Specifically the interviewees' opinions on:

1. the need for two different types of operators within the province and who should be operating kindergarten

programs.

2. whether or not kindergarten attendance should be mandatory.

These will be dealt with in the order presented above.

The Interviewees' Opinions on the Need for Two Types of Kindergarten Operators Within the Province and Who Should be Operating Kindergarten Programs

Of the seven individuals interviewed four felt that there was a need for privately operated kindergartens, two individuals felt that they should be disbanded as their function could be easily assumed by the school boards, one individual indicated that she had no particularly strong feelings on the matter. It is interesting to note that five of the seven individuals interviewed indicated that they knew very little about privately operated kindergartens. This is interesting as all of the interviewees were considered "experts" in early childhood education and all had extensive experience in the area. Their lack of knowledge about private operators would appear to imply that there is little communication between school board operated programs and private operators, an obvious concern in terms of consistency of philosophy of programs, etc.

Among those who supported the retention of private operators the main argument put forward for their retention was the choice this option provided to parents. As one interviewee pointed out:

> I think that the public needs a choice. I believe that variety and flexibility in types of programming and things like that are very important to maintain in early childhood programs.

It may be, however. that many parents do not realize they have this choice and feel that their child is "better off" in the types of structured programs mandatory kindergarten could bring about. As Barnhart(1985-86:21) points out:

> Early childhood services programs, because they are accountable to Alberta Education, have a heavy emphasis on the educational component. Parents are not generally aware that children can learn and have fun at the same time.

Despite the fact that they supported the retention of private kindergartens all the interviewees who felt this way suggested that there should be some type of monitoring of programs. The agency seen as being responsible for this was usually the government and it was seen as a protection for parents and their children.

The two individuals who felt privately operated programs should become the responsibility of school boards gave a number of reasons for feeling the way they did. For example it was suggested that the dupication of services was not economical. As one interviewee noted:

> I think if you're running a good program in the public schools then there shouldn't be a need for private kindergartens to be operating. I have a problem with that from the point of view of economics.

It was also pointed out that privately operated kindergartens did not have the access to support staff that

school board operated programs did, e.g. speech therapists, psychologists, etc. School board operated kindergartens were able to access these directly from the school district whereas private operators had to go through the local health unit, and this was seen as usually a particularly long and complex procedure. It was noted that the problem was even more acute in rural areas where such support services were even scarcer and harder to access than in the cities. The utilization of support staff for early childhood services programs has been stressed by a number of writers (cf. Torgunrud, 1985-86; Trolian, 1985-86 and Klein, 1981). It is felt that this type of support is vital to the concept of early childhood and something that private operators may not have as easily available to them as school board operators.

It was also felt that private operators did not have access to the "inservice" opportunities that school board operators had and so this could influence the quality of their programs. Several other points were raised by a number of the interviewees and while they are neither pro or con the dissolution of privately operated kindergartens they are in and of themselves inherently interesting and help illuminate the present situation surrounding kindergarten education.

First, a number of the interviewees indicated they felt private operators followed a similar philosophy to school board operators. Although most interviewees also indicated they knew little of private operators and that this

parallelling of philosophies was occurring by accident rather than design.

Second as stated earlier all interviewees felt that regardless of who operated them there must be a monitoring of kindergarten programs. This monitoring was not only to apply to programs but to staff, facilities, etc. to ensure quality and consistency of early childhood philosophies.

A third point which was raised related to salaries and the fact that school board operated programs usually could pay higher salaries than private operators. This situation was not seen as being a desirable one as it created inequalities and could influence the quality of staff in private operations.

Finally, one interviewee suggested that from her own personal experience she felt that children entering grade 1 from a privately operated program experienced more "transition trauma" (her term) than children coming from a school board operated program. Although she did acknowledge that this trauma, she felt, was less if the private operator was housed in a school. This is an interesting concept and although the difference in transitions from private operators versus school board operators has not been investigated, one of the few studies found by this researcher did deal with kindergarten to Grade 1 transitions. The article "Orientation to School and Transitions of Children between Primary Grades" by Dr. Margie Mayfield did suggest that a large number (over 75%)

of kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers and school principals "indicated that they thought children had problems making the transition...between kindergarten and Grade 1" (Mayfield, 1983:282). Although, as noted above, the study did not compare operators it did suggest that the reasons for the problems in transition were usually not "school-centered" but "child-centered", eg. shyness, learning problems, etc. This topic like others raised in this thesis suggests a further area for study.

To conclude this part of the second section, the majority of interviewees(4-2) felt that privately operated kindergartens should be retained. Arguments were presented for their incorporation by school boards but the main argument against this move, i.e. the right of choice, appeared to outweigh the reasons for incorporation. A number of other issues, which also surrounded the differences between private and school board operators were also raised. These issues focused on the commonality of philosophies, monitoring of programs, a comparison of salaries and the transition from the respective programs to grade one.

The Interviewees' Opinions On Whether Or Not Kindergarten Attendance Should Be Mandatory

All but one of the seven individuals interviewed felt that kindergarten attendance should not be mandatory. This is in keeping with the Alberta Education Program Policy Manual which suggests that:

> Early Childhood Services is a *voluntary* program directed at the integration of education, health, recreation and social services for young children below the age of school entrance.

The major factor which was stated against making Kindergarten mandatory was once again choice. As one interviewee noted:

> I think parents should make a decision whether they want their child to go to an institution at this early age. While public education should be foremost in suggesting that these programs do assist their children. I think the parent should have the last say on whether they want their children to attend.

Several interviewees supported this idea although one who did not support kindergarten being mandatory felt "a good home could do far better than even the very best Kindergarten program". The individual who thought Kindergarten should be mandatory noted however that:

> I know that a lot of people say "oh well I do all these things at home with my children anyway"...but you know its not the same. It's not the same as having them with that group of children where they learn to socialize.

Socialization was seen to be one of the major factors put forward even by those who did not agree with Kindergarten being mandatory. One interviewee supported this when she noted that " learning to get along with other children is very helpful". However the right to choose was felt to outweigh this factor.

Another argument against making Kindergarten mandatory which was put forward by several of the interviewees was that education was broader than the school. That is, school is not the only place children learn.

It was noted however by the one individual who felt kindergarten should be mandatory and even by a few who did not that children who attended kindergarten were generally better equipped to handle grade one. That is the children who had been to a kindergarten were deemed better able to handle the transition to grade one. Mayfield(1983:278) noted that 28% of parents of children who had attended kindergarten felt their child had difficulty making the transition from kindergarten to grade one. She pointed out(1983:278) that there was a "relatively high percentage of agreement between kindergarten teachers and grade one teachers on the need for more coordination"(between the levels). Mayfield(1983:279) also reported that parents indicate "a desire for information about what was expected of their child and what their child would be doing during the year. Kelly and Kelly(1985-86:13) point out that the:

> transition between preschool and elementary school may be too stessful for many young children because of the different learning styles present in each. Very often in a preschool program children learn through play in group activity centres, whereas, in the Grade 1 classroom, many learning tasks are done individually, sitting at a desk, using pencil and paper. For some children, this more formal, structured approach can be very unfamiliar and unnatural. Most of the stresses of Grade 1 are not academic. They lie in the social, physical, and emotional areas.

This problem of the transition from kindergarten to grade one is obviously difficult and maybe more so for children who enter grade one straight from the home situation. Promoters of the concept of articulation currently being proposed in Alberta have made much mention of this

transition period, as it is one of the major issues which confronts them as they begin to implement their ideas within the school systems.

Several of the interviewees suggested that they supported the idea of cooperation with parents, as suggested by Mayfield, and the building of a relationship between kindergarten teachers and grade one teachers. They also noted that as consultants they had attempted to foster this type of approach. Also they felt that if kindergarten did become a grade of school it would possibly take the parents out of the program and this was problematic. Both Torgunrud(1985-86) and Trolian(1985-86) have suggested that within articulation that parental involvement must be preserved as an integral part of the program.

Mayfield(1983:278) suggested the main reasons that children had difficulty in making the kindergarten to grade one transition was a lack of maturity and problems they had with the relatively structured curriculum of grade one. Again a number of interviewees raised these points and supported them. One interviewee suggested that early childhood programs were already too structured and focused too much on cognitive skills. She suggested that there could be a displacement down from Grade One of the cognitive emphasis and some people would feel that the sooner they could get children working at cognitive skills "the smarter they will be." This she saw as antithetical to the kindergarten philosophy and problematic in terms of other

areas of a child's development. It is interesting to note that this issue is raised in 1986 as when kindergartens were originally being developed in Alberta a memorandum from a meeting between the Minister of Education and the Parent Cooperative Kindergartens of Greater Edmonton pointed out that kindergarten is not "a lower form of elementary education to be preparatory to grade one skills in reading, writing and reasoning". It would appear that the problems that faced kindergartens in 1973 are still many of the ones that beset it today.

A final disadvantage that was seen if kindergartens were incorporated as a grade of school was that they would loose their child centered approach and become "product oriented". Consequently it would have to become a structured program, and much of the freedom associated with this level of schooling would be lost. Again, this type of concern has been echoed in much of the writing on the concept of articulation.

In summary then the majority opinion of the interviewees was that although kindergarten was generally seen as being beneficial to children it should not become mandatory. The right of parents to choose for their children was seen as being paramount. It was also felt that because a lot of children did attend kindergarten there was need for more efforts to make the transition to Grade One as smooth as possible. However, the kindergarten program should still be kept relatively unstructured and retain its philosophy of

focusing on all areas of a child's development.

E. The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Incorporation of Kindergarten as a Required Part of the Educational System

The purpose of this section of the results and discussion is to outline some of the advantages and disadvantages that the interviwees saw as emanating from the incorporation of kindergarten as a required part of the educational system. These advantages and disadvantages are dealt with in the order in which they were originally presented as issues in Table 1, i.e.,

1. Teacher Benefits
2. Facilities
3. Student Benefits
4. Program Needs
5. Support Staff
6. Administration
7. Salaries and Benefits

Teacher Benefits

At the present time in the province of Alberta kindergarten programs are coordinated by two distinct types of operators -- school board and private. They operate independently but yet are both governed by the Early Childhood Services Branch, of the Alberta Department of Education. In relation to these programs and who can teach in them Early Childhood Services of Alberta Education has

set forth the following covering regulations:

1. An operator in conducting an early childhood services program may employ as early childhood services teachers only those persons qualified as early childhood services teachers in accordance with these regulations.
2. To qualify as an early childhood services teacher, a person shall have
   a. an Alberta teaching certificate or a letter of authority, and,
   b. a special early childhood services diploma or an interim permit(Alberta Education, 1983).

The first topic that interviewees were asked to comment on was the set of criteria they would use for selecting a kindergarten teacher. There were a number of areas of consensus on the particular "profile" of an ideal early childhood teacher. These areas can be summarized in the following points. It was felt the early childhood services teacher should have:

1. background training or an early childhood diploma in early childhood education.
2. prior experience in early childhood services programs.
3. a desire to work with young children.
4. the ability to work with parents.
5. the ability to work in a creative, flexible program.

All respondents felt it was vital that early childhood services teachers have training in early childhood education. The training was seen as essential to provide the necessary background knowledge in child development, the "centre" learning approach and the "whole" child concept of teaching. Although these were seen as the qualifications for all types of kindergarten teachers it was noted that there

were a number of benefits to working for school board operated kindergartens and these were such that they may attract teachers who more closely met these ideal type reqirements.

When asked to respond as to the benefits teachers gained from working in a school board operated program there were a number perceived by the interviewees. The benefits were:

1. the resources within the school and system available to the teacher.
2. the contact with other teachers in the school and system.
3. the salary the teachers received.
4. the professional growth a teacher is able to gain(i.e., ATA affiliation, conferences, etc.).
5. the inservice training available.
6. the access to facilities and resource personnel.
7. the support system within a school and school district(i.e., principals, secretaries, janitors, librarians).
8. the services provided by the system to assist in the teacher's program planning(i.e., consultants, area specialists, "bureau" team).
9. the fact that teachers are viewed as an integral part of the school staff.

As one interviewee explained one of the most important benefits was:

> ...the resources around...the contact with the other teachers. The services that we have that the teacher can tap and the inservices that one can attend and really the support system that we have from our consultants from our subject area people. In fact, from the space that you can manipulate within the school. If there's a music room you can use it. If there's a gymnasium, you can use it. Even in a private school, they may have it but you really have more resources at a system level available to you than you do in a private school which is limited only to that school.

There were however a number of disadvantages the interviewees cited for a teacher who is involved in a school board operated program. They were:

1. the constraining forces on the teacher's planning of a program as a result of being part of a large school board (i.e., school timetabling, assemblies, concerts, etc.).
2. the loss of autonomy for a teacher and their kindergarten program which may be reflected in the present school board operated kindergarten programs.
3. the dilemma school board operator early childhood teachers may find themselves in when the issue of "retention" is raised based on grade one readiness skills.

As one interviewee said:

> the only thing that I can think of is a measure of autonomy. There are school district policies and most of them are pretty good policies. I don't have any particular quarrels with them but it does mean working within the constraints that policies and regulations within a school district might have... there are constraining forces as a result of being part of a big school district.

Another interviewee noted the following regarding the

kindergarten teacher's role with respect to retention of students in the program:

> We still seem to be basing our progress on a graded system attitude...and you see, that to me is where I get into the goals and objectives of the early childhood services. I don't think from what I understand it back in 1973 and those goals still hold true, that it ever had the implication of readying this child for Grade One and I don't think that in the purest sense this was ever the intent of an early childhood services program.

Another key issue which will affect both school board and private operator's teachers is the recently introduced policy on "articulation". As the government has suggested this policy should be adopted in 1986-87 and planning in Phase 1 should begin between the kindergarten and grade one teacher. The effect "articulation planning" will have on a kindergarten teacher was summarized by one interviewee when she commented:

> I think it's going to be a greater demand on his/her time. 'Cause I think that in terms of that planning process, they will be heavily involved, at the school level. So if they don't need to spend any more time doing things, this will make it even harder for them. I think from a positive point of view it will be an opportunity to have more of the philosophy and the focus validated. So I think there will be negative aspects, there might be some things that take some energy from actually doing the program and working with the parents, but I think that most teachers will be able to see the opportunity to, to seize the opportunities when they can really make some input.

Articulation was also seen as providing some degree of continuity between staff as it would essentially force kindergarten and grade one teachers to interact. Trolian(1985-86:10) sees staff continuity as an important part of the move to articulation. She points out that:

> Klein described staff continuity as the attempt by teachers, aides and instructors to gain an understanding of their student's previous learning experiences before entering their respective programs and to gain further knowledge of the future learning experiences of these children.

Staff continuity could be fostered through inservice sessions, professional development days, etc. All administrators involved with kindergarten and grade one programs must be cognizant of its value and work to promote it. This may however prove more difficult for kindergarten teachers in privately operated programs as they are not in as close proximity with each other as are teachers in a school board operated program. Consequently the move to articulation may be one which will benefit teachers in school board operated programs more so than those in private operations.

In conclusion then it can be stated that a typical "profile" of an early childhood teacher would be an individual who possessed early childhood training and an early childhood diploma, had experience working with children and parents, and conducted a flexible early childhood program. The benefits these individuals would obtain from working in a school board operation could be summarized under three broad categories:

1. individual salary and health benefits;
2. professional growth and development within the system;
3. service and resource personnel to assist in the programs.

The main disadvantages seen for the teacher working in a school board operated program were:

1. the constraining forces imposed by a large school system;
2. the loss of autonomy;
3. the issue of retention of kindergarten students.

In regard to "articulation planning" the majority of respondents agreed that kindergarten teachers will play a vital role in the coordination of planning for articulation and ensuring the goals and objectives of early childhood services programs are kept in place. There may however be more benefits from articulation for a school board operator than for a private operator.

Facilities

For the purposes of this study the researcher felt it was relevant to include questions about facilities in relation to the delivery of early childhood service programs. The people interviewed responded to four key issues surrounding facilities, which were:

1. their importance in relation to early childhood service programs.
2. the disparities between school board operated facilities.
3. the advantages and disadvantages of kindergarten being located in school board operated facilities.
4. the class size restrictions in school board operated

facilities.

From the data collected the unanimous opinion was that facilities were very important but secondary to the importance of a skilled and knowledgable teacher. This point was emphasized by one of the interviewees as they commented on the importance of facilities:

> ...you have to be careful because the facility and the things within that room are only as good as the teacher makes them. You can have a beautiful room. You can have all the most expensive and modern kinds of furniture and equipment and if the teacher doesn't know how to organize and utilize those pieces of equipment and so on and other resources, then it doesn't work. No matter how much money you spend on that.

Obviously there is a need to furnish a facility appropriately to meet the needs of the program and children. Within school board operated kindergartens the facility is generally a school classroom and the quality of space (size, lighting, location) can vary between schools. These disparities in the quality of facility can be in terms of an old school as opposed to a new school, the use of a portable to house a kindergarten room, the lack of space, insufficient lighting, poor location in respect to bathrooms, sinks, water, access to playground, etc. It was felt all these physical restraints set on the program, by the very nature of the facility, could limit the scope of the program and affect the teacher's morale. On the other hand there could be an important boost to pupil and teacher morale in attractive and comfortable surroundings. Obviously then if kindergarten does become incorporated into the

school system it is beneficial for appropriate facilities to be available, this type of program must not be merely "stuck" in any available space.

All interviewees viewed it as a very advantageous situation to have kindergartens operating within school facilities. Some of the more obvious advantages cited were the accessibility to and use of various areas of the school (i.e. library, gymnasium, art room, science room, music room, staff room for use of fridge and stove), and the feeling of community within the school student population of which kindergarten is considered a part(i.e. buddy system, playground contact). Again Trolian(1985-86:10) stresses that it is beneficial if the early childhood services and primary programs are housed in the same building. She suggests sometimes this may be difficult particularly in rural areas but administrators and teachers should work towards this goal. She also suggests that there are other ways in which programs can be physically brought together, these include interclass visits, combining field trips, special events, etc. Again if kindergarten is to be incorporated into the school system these factors must be considered in its incorporation.

In relation to the disadvantages of kindergartens operating within a school one point was raised - the problem of flexibility for the kindergarten program. As a part of the school a kindergarten program soon becomes governed by school timetabling, schedules, bells, assigned recess

breaks, etc. this in turn can cause constraints on the program the teacher plans.

In respect to facilities a valid consideration was class size. This was addressed in the questioning and all respondents felt there should be class size restrictions but this should be governed by the particular circumstance and the needs of the children. As one interviewee summarized:

> ...what we're talking about is a range rather than a number or limit or a restricted number or something like that. And then I think it has to be judged on the circumstances of the situation. What kind of skill does the teacher have? Are there teacher aide people available that have got skill and that are well trained? What kind of backup is for that individual in terms of special needs children, whatever? How involved are the other adults in the community, parents and so on? And I think the judgement has to be made given the factors. And it's so different from one school to another, from one area to another.

Again if kindergartens become incorporated consideration must be given to their unique requirements in terms of class size.

In conclusion this section on facilities reflected the opinions that kindergarten facilities were indeed very important, that disparities between facilities offered in a school board operation could affect the program by the very real impact of class size and location. It was felt by all respondents that there were many benefits from a kindergarten being housed in a school(gym, library, resources, equipment, etc.) but because of the organizational timetabling within the school there could be an infringement on the flexibility of the kindergarten

program. All respondents felt there should be a maximum class size restriction in school board operated programs, however varying circumstances should dictate how individual schools handled the enrollment in each kindergarten class.

Student Benefits

Throughout the entirety of this research the underlying purpose was to investigate how early childhood services has benefitted the development of appropriate programs for the kindergarten child. Clearly, with the establishment of the Early Childhood Services Branch in 1973, it was shown there was a strong advocacy for these programs. The concern expressed over the quality and coordination of these programs encompassed four areas inherent in the early childhood services system. They were: 1) the child; 2) the family; 3) the staff and 4) the community.

This particular section will deal with the child and the benefits that were perceived, by the interviewees, for the child attending a mandatory kindergarten program. First, it was felt by all interviewees (7) that children benefitted from a kindergarten program. A well-planned and organized program, in keeping with the basic Early Childhood Services goals and objectives, could provide the child with a wealth of new experiences (i.e., field trips, exposure to new materials, interaction with peers and adults, opportunity to try new ideas, and being involved in a learning situation). Second, interviewees felt that children benefitted from

their inclusion in a school community which in turn helped with the transition from kindergarten to grade one. As Mayfield(1983) has previously noted this is an issue which requires attention from those involved with the kindergarten and grade one programs. The children were also given opportunities to be included in school assemblies, school activities, buddy systems(pairing of a kindergarten student with another student in the school), camps, concerts, etc. which, in turn, could give the kindergarten children a positive attitude toward the school setting. Third, it was perceived that through interaction with other children, teachers and parents and their involvement in new and interesting experiences the kindergarten children would develop confidence in themselves and a positive self-concept.

These findings serve to re-emphasize the objective previously set out by the Edmonton Public School District when it stated that one of its goals was:

> to provide a climate of trust, warmth, security, and understanding which will assist each child to create an attitude toward himself and others conducive to the development of a positive self-concept(Reid, 1970:1).

We see this stated again in the goals of the Early Childhood Services Branch(1984) when it is written that early childhood services programs should:

> ...contribute to the development of a positive, self-concept in young children. This includes the knowledge, acceptance and appreciation of oneself as an individual and an acceptance and appreciation of others as individuals.

With the possible mandatory inclusion of these programs under the auspices of school board operators there were two factors identified by the interviewees which they felt could negatively affect the kindergarten child. The first one identified was the issue of retention, or what is colloquially referred to as "repeating kindergarten". All those interviewed felt this issue had to be dealt with very carefully in terms of the purpose behind the retention decision as it could possibly affect the child's self-concept. As was stated by one respondent:

> the term failure and the concept of failing has got to go, absolutely. Use of that concept has not correlated in any way to the development of positive self-concept. It is a negative approach and it's very narrow and narrow minded I think and not at all consistent with early childhood philosophy.

Another interviewee saw the situation somewhat differently, she noted:

> One area of concern I would have in that area of retention is that we tend to base a lot of the reasons why we retain a child on the intellectual and yet we profess to look at the total child and we say that we do have a continuous progress sort of attitude in this system and yet I wonder if you don't feel that when you retain a child, how does that affect them when he sees his group of friends moving on and he is still back in a different classroom.

As well as affecting a child's self-concept a notable reason for retention was identified by one interviewee when she said:

> the spoken reasons are that the child is not ready for grade one. The child does not have whatever is deemed the readiness skills and many of those are based on how well a child recognizes the alphabet, the number system, how well the child handles pencil and paper, how well the child follows instructions

on pencil, paper tasks and this kind of thing.

This reason behind retention was expressed by the majority of respondents as a major concern. For the far-reaching affects may be that kindergarten programs are geared to prepare children for grade one by focusing on one aspect of their development - the cognitive or intellectual and therefore ignoring the four other equally important areas - social, physical, creative and emotional. A fear was expressed that in essence what was happening was a "downward projection" of grade one curriculum and program onto these children to prepare them for the entry into grade one. In light of this a second concern arose which related to a child's progress into grade one i.e., the transition from a child-centered approach to the structure and restraints of a graded school system. Obviously there was a concern on the part of the provincial government when the recently released policy on "articulation" was announced. This was supported by the words of one interviewee:

> I believe that the difference between our kindergarten programs, which I think for the most part in our province are fairly strong, and then the shift into the grade one program with a preset curriculum and preset expectations which are often times unrealistic and not suited to individual students was a reason for the initiation of an articulation emphasis.

One of the key issues dealt with in this policy was the transition from grade to grade (K-3). When questioned on this issue of transition all respondents were in agreement with the basic objectives of articulation in terms of facilitating a smoother transition for the kindergarten

child. However a more far-reaching effect from the articulation policy may well be the impact kindergarten will have on the "grades" of school. This view was expressed by one interviewee when she stated:

> I see the kindergarten teacher as the key person in the whole process. I think that the kindergarten teacher has to be someone who can convince her colleagues that there are things that she does that are not just play, that are valuable approaches to helping children learn, that centres can provide learning opportunities for children. She needs to share her ways of evaluating children in that setting with them and work closely in letting them see her program and show an openness and willingness to look at their programs so that they can try to coordinate what is happening from program to program.

This type of comment reinforces Trolian's previously cited commentary on the importance of "staff continuity".

In summary this section on student benefits has outlined three main advantages for a child attending a mandatory kindergarten program, specifically a school board operated program. They were:

1. the opportunity to participate in new and enriching experiences.
2. the exposure to a school situation in terms of facilities, resources, and climate.
3. the interaction with peers, teachers and other adults which can lead to a feeling of confidence and develop a positive self-concept.

Two areas of concern were raised in respect to a child's involvement in a mandatory kindergarten program. They were the issue of retention in regard to a child's

progress in Kindergarten and the ease of transition to grade one from a "centre approach" learning situation. The majority of respondents(6-1) felt that the concept of "articulation" would address these issues if, in fact, the Kindergarten teacher became a strong lobbyist for the beliefs of an early childhood program projecting up through the grades.

Program Needs

From the initial establishment of early childhood services in 1973 to the present day Kindergartens of 1986 one unique quality has remained intact - the program. The components of these successful early childhood services programs which parents, educators and government lobbied so hard for in the early '70's are still reflected in the guidelines set out in Alberta Education's(1985) edition of Program Policy Manual. They are:

> a) learning activities;
> (i) are sequentially undertaken by children in accordance with their individual needs, and
> (ii) are experienced within structured and child-initiated play.
> b) emphasis is placed on the development of a positive self-concept and the assurance of self-satisfaction in each child;
> c) opportunities are provided for learning within an exploratory environment designed to meet the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and creative needs of each child.
> d) parents are provided with clearly defined opportunities for direct as well as indirect involvement in planning, implementing and evaluating their children's programs and those which are undertaken by the parents themselves(Alberta Education, 1985:15).

These guidelines reflect the opinions of the people interviewed as to their beliefs concerning the successful components of a mandatory kindergarten program were. As one interviewee stated:

> ...the most successful components are the attention to the needs of the child as a focus, the total needs of the child as the focus of the program...beyond that is the involvement of the families as an extension of the child...the wholistic nature of the program is a very flexible kind of instrument that really can be expanded or contracted depending on what it is you need to do on any particular time...it's a very creative process.

Although most respondents reflected on the flexible, creative aspect of the program there was also agreement that kindergarten program planning should become integrated into the school curriculum. This presents somewhat of a contradiction as kindergarten is not a required grade of the provincial school systems. But as one interviewee stated:

> ...as it becomes more integrated with the school curriculum and I don't think that there's any doubt, we're well on the way to that and I think it should as long as we don't lose some of those nice qualities, that it doesn't get watered down to the point that you can hardly recognize the differences.

One method of achieving a successful union between legislated school curriculum and early childhood philosophies has recently been introduced by Alberta Education under the label of "articulation". When asked about articulation one respondent answered:

> I think that they are looking for teachers (K-3) to work more closely together in terms of the way they present information to children, the resources that are used and the goals and objectives at the various grade levels. And I think that's a very positive thing to be doing.

In terms of the effects that "articulation planning" may have on kindergarten programs, all respondents were very positive about this approach. As one intervewee pointed out:

> I think the kindergarten teachers can facilitate the grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers' development in terms of understanding the early childhood objectives because all our early childhood teachers have early childhood diplomas, all of our kindergarten teachers have early childhood diplomas. The majority of our grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers do not. And I think kindergarten teachers, planning and working with grade one teachers for example will help grade one teachers understand the approach, the early childhood philosophy. Also, obviously if they plan together, continuity can be better addressed and there's no doubt that there's benefit to the kindergarten teacher. If she or he has better insight into what the grade one curriculum per se is.

In summary of this section on program needs there was a clear consensus that the early childhood services program was a well established and beneficial influence on the educational perspectives in our province. There were four unique attributes to this program. They were:

1. the "centre" approach or "play" theory of learning.
2. the development of confidence and a positive self-concept in each child.
3. the emphasis on the five developmental areas of a child - the physical, social, emotional, cultural and intellectual aspects.
4. the "parental involvement" aspect of the program.

If kindergarten was to become a mandatory part of the school system it was felt these four attributes should not be lost rather there should be an effort to project them upwards into grade one and the other grades of school. In

terms of the recently introduced policy of articulation, respondents felt this would help this upward projection and provide the opportunity for kindergarten teachers to introduce these unique and valuable characteristics of an early childhood program to the primary grades (1,2 and 3) Consequently this would result in the implementation of changes that would see more continuity for the child in terms of program and individual progress.

Support Staff

As the scope of the kindergarten encompasses the four areas previously mentioned in Student Benefits - 1) the child, 2) the family 3) the staff and 4) the community so too the support for these programs are drawn from these sources. First support comes in the form of recognizing the unique characteristics of the parents, children and families involved in the kindergarten and attempting to be cognizant of these characteristics when planning the kindergarten program. With regard to this concept of "bridging the gap" between home and school, the initial guidelines for early childhood services in the Edmonton Public School District programs stated one of its major purposes was:

> to help the child's parents widen and enrich their own knowledge and understanding by contributing to and participating in the experiences provided by the school(Reid, 1970:1).

The resulting effects of this policy have been perhaps the most influential outcome of early childhood education philosophies across the spectrum of education within the

total school district. "Parental involvement" is an established part of the majority of early childhood programs and indeed also a part of the total school framework. As one interviewee states in support of this policy:

> ...the backup by the parents to the work of the program is absolutely critical. Parents working to understand what's happening and participating with the teacher in developing the programs and participating in the programs. I think it's absolutely critical.

All respondents felt that parental involvement was very important to the success of the program, however there was a concern that in many situations parents were involved in many "token" tasks (cutting, laminating, field trips, classroom work). Although this type of support was very worthy it was felt that if kindergarten became mandatory more effort must be exerted in planning activities for the parent's interests (guest speakers, program planning, special talents, etc.).

Second in terms of support for the kindergarten program and teacher from the school staff and the education system help is obtained from such individuals as teacher aides, school support personnel (librarians, counsellors, secretaries, and janitors) and system resource personnel such as psychologists, speech therapists etc. Ideally all respondents felt a kindergarten program could benefit from having a teacher aide in the classroom. Priorities were placed on an aide's background experience, training and attitude when selecting them for placement in a program. In relation to the role of the teacher aide within the early

childhood program the words of one interviewee summarize the major points made by the other interviewees:

> We defined the role here as three things. One is providing assistance to the teacher in working directly with the children and that's the most critical role. The second is providing backup to the teacher in terms of materials, selection, development, acquiring, using materials and so on...back up the teacher there. The third is basic secretarial work so that the teacher's time can be more intently spent on educational plans and not on miniscule, trivial secretarial work. So we look for people who are first skilled in working with children and people, second have some knowledge of materials, preparation and development, and third, hopefully, have some secretarial skills we can put to use.

It was felt by the respondents that factors affecting the hiring of an aide, in the majority of cases, were based on 1) finances or budget of the school and 2) the concerted effort on the part of the staff or principal in facilitating this. In respect to the training of an aide all respondents (7) felt it would be very beneficial for the aide to have educational training in the area of early childhood education, although it was felt this would not be the sole determinant of a successful aide. In respect to the school situation, a kindergarten very often can utilize the services of a school secretary, the janitor, the librarian and the counsellor. This again is an example of how school board operated programs have some of their operational costs absorbed by the school and ultimately the school district.

In the area of support staff, across the system, who are involved with kindergarten programs another group of resource personnel were identified. This team of "bureau"

specialists consists of psychologists, speech therapists, social workers and counsellors. Their services are available to the school board operated programs which is an extremely important resource when assessing a child's development in specific areas. As one interviewee noted:

> available to the school but from outside the school are psychologists, speech therapists, social workers, reading specialists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists. We've got some other people that are available in terms of physical handicaps that have different specialties and then all of the consulting people. All the consultants in child development, early childhood education and specific content subject areas, instructional processes. So it's a pretty full range in a big school district like this one.

There are no assigned costs to the individual program for these services from the system's resource personnel. This is a significant advantage to the school board operator as opposed to the private operator who cannot draw from such a "pool" of expertise and who must, when there is a need, pay for the services out of their annual budgets.

The last area of support for programs can be drawn from the community. Community health services are available to the majority of programs through community health nurse visitations. Teachers are encouraged to invite in guests, speakers, service people and those with special talents to enrich and provide experiences for the child and parent. This belief is inherent in the early childhood services philosophy as is noted in the Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions :

> community resource persons can assist in meeting developmental and special needs of children and

families(Alberta Education, 1984:1).

To summarize the findings of this section on support staff it can be concluded that support comes from four sources - 1) the child 2) the family, 3) the staff and 4) the community. First the most significant source of support, from the child and family, is "parental involvement" which has endured from the initial establishment of early childhood programs in this province and has been shown to have a profound effect up through the grades of school. Second the support of the staff can be categorized in respect to 1) school and 2) system. In regard to school staff support kindergarten programs may elicit the help of teacher aides, principals, librarians, counsellors, school secretaries and janitors. The system offers the services of the "bureau" team (psychologists, speech therapists, social workers, counsellors, etc.), consultants, early childhood specialists, etc. One last source of support comes from the community in respect to community health services and the wealth of "talented" people who can offer assistance to the program (police, nurses, artists, guest speakers, etc.).

Administration

One of the differences between school board operated kindergartens and privately operated kindergartens is in the administration of the two programs. In school board operated kindergartens the programs are able to make use of a relatively complex administrative supra structure to manage

the affairs of the various programs. This means things like salaries, benefits, maintenance, etc. are all centralized and usually highly standardized. These types of administrations are also usually stable in terms of personnel, location and even such intangibles as philosophy. In contrast privately operated kindergartens are not able to call on the same type of administrative supra structure, they are essentially operated like many of the other voluntary type agencies that exist in our society. Consequently the administration is often of an unstable, transient nature and the actors within the administration may often be different people from year to year. These people bring with them different philosophies to the organization and this may prove problematic in terms of program continuity.

All interviewees felt that if Kindergarten became mandatory the type of administrative support given by school board operators was advantageous. They did express concern that within this system as it presently exists there are many discrepancies. As one interviewee pointed out in regards to program areas like field trips, materials, supplies, etc.:

> this is where we see a variation from one school to another. For example, we'll see some teachers managing up to two or three field trips a month...where as others will have to limit themselves to maybe one per month.

Another interviewee felt that these types of discrepancies were often a result of the emphasis a principal of a school

placed on early childhood education. As pointed out below, in an extract from her interview, she felt this situation was improving as more people within early childhood education were being made principals. She noted:

> I suspect there are some people still in administration who don't understand early childhood education and over the last while maybe one of the significant changes that is happening is that there has been a tremendous increase in the number of school principals that have early childhood education backgrounds. I think this is having a tremendous impact as it means early childhood gets a better deal as they understand the problems.

Despite the discrepancies that did exist interviewees, as noted earlier, did support the centralized school board operated administration. The centralization was seen as making kindergarten operations more consistent, more egalitarian and often more efficient.

There were however concerns, for example a privately operated kindergarten with a more informal administration could easily make decisions. They did not have to go through the formal bureaucratic channels as did school board operators. As one interviewee pointed out, in an example, this had its advantages:

> If you want your room painted you get some parents to do it you don't have to wait until your school's turn comes...or if you go ahead and do it yourself face violating some type of union regulation.

Although this type of "freedom" was seen to have benefits the standardized and centralized administrative system was seen as a very definite benefit that would be available to all kindergartens if they all became a part of the school system.

Salaries and Benefits

One important aspect of a teacher's job satisfaction is the quality of environment that they experience in their job. To feel personally fulfilled there are personal rewards or types of remuneration that one hopes to gain from their occupation. In relation to Early Childhood Services Programs this job satisfaction may vary according to whether a teacher is employed by a private or school board operator. The circumstances may vary greatly in terms of salary and personal benefits. It was because of this reason that the researcher felt it was important that this area of concern be researched and the various recorded points of view be examined.

One of the major points which surfaced in each interview was the fact that large school boards have the capacity to absorb a lot of the operational costs of kindergartens, i.e., facilities, equipment, furniture, transportation which in contrast a private operation cannot. Therefore because of the tax on the budget of private operators there may be less monies for teachers' salaries.

As an employee of a school board operator, a teacher belongs to a collective bargaining unit, and therefore can be a full member of the ATA. In this respect a teacher's qualifications(training and experience) are assessed on a grid and there is the assurance of receiving the wage agreed upon by the school board and ATA Local. The teacher can also enter into a teaching contract which can give the security

of permanency of position. As one interviewee noted:

> The contract, the continuous contract is a very good deal for teachers. The support through, you know, the salary benefits, the leaves, that kind of...the whole mechanism that is associated with our contract.

In terms of the "whole mechanism" another area is the health benefits provided by the school system (i.e. dental care, hearing/ vision, health insurance, life insurance and pension benefits). To the largest extent the cost of these health premiums are covered 100% by the school system. Although private operators are encouraged by Alberta Education to offer benefits and salaries on parity with school board operators this is not always financially feasible.

As a result of these previously mentioned benefits, salary and contract, school boards are able to attract certified, degreed, well-qualified candidates for their positions. The security that a school board can offer a successful candidate can in turn benefit the kindergarten program. There are fewer reasons for turnover of staff or transiency which can be hard on the continuity of a program. In relation to the security of position a contracted teacher has the assurance that even if enrollments drop in a particular school or area of her/his school jurisdiction there will be a teaching position elsewhere in the system. For the teacher in a privately operated kindergarten this can be problematic since the monetary base for operation is dependent in large part on per pupil grants from the

government and the assessment of fees paid by the parents.

This, in turn, brings out a very critical difference in the operational systems of school board and private operators - the levels of funding. Although both operators depend on provincial funding (i.e., per pupil grants) the crucial difference is the inability on the part of the private operator to tax the public. One interviewee cited this as:

> ...the inability of a private operator to tax is probably the main thing. They just do not have access to the same funds that the school districts have.

It is interesting to note that in 1975 two briefs, one from the Calgary Kindergarten Teachers Association and the other from the Lethbridge Pre-School Project, were presented to the "Committee to Study Briefs to the Early Childhood Services Coordinating Council". An area of concern which arose from both briefs was "funding from early childhood services...is not sufficient to operate the program and pay competitive salaries for the qualified teachers provincial regulations demand".

After a review of the briefs, the committee's findings were summarized. One reference to salaries was stated as "Many private operators have no significant source of additional financial support except for the charity of staff working for below-market-level wages(Committee to Study Briefs, 1975).

Although committee recommendations were made to ensure equitable levels of government funding and to investigate a

"per program" funding, it might be sumarized that the "inequalities" still exist eleven years later. This is one area recommended by the researcher for further study and reporting, i.e., the outcomes of these recommendations made to the Provincial Early Childhood Services Coordinating Council at their September meeting in 1975.

This discrepancy in respect to these funds can well lead to even more discrepancies between the services offered by school board operators in respect to private operators. Kindergarten teachers operating in schools have a direct line to the consultative and referral services of professionals and educators such as principals, resource personnel(librarians, area specialists, system early childhood services consultants, teachers on staff) and consultative services (bureau team, i.e., psychologists, speech therapists, weekly school visitations by Community Public Health Nurse. The cost of retaining the services of these professionals is borne by the total operational budget of the system - a luxury a private operator cannot afford.

In regard to the area of salaries and benefits there is a somewhat "grey" area concerning the inequality of measures to insure a "standard" quality of benefits for the early childhood services teacher on the part of Early Childhood Services. On one hand, Alberta Education, dictates that all early childhood services programs shall be taught by early childhood services certified degreed personnel and yet this same governing body has not provided an equitable salary or

benefit package base for teachers of this program. As was previously mentioned in this section recommendations were made in September 1975 to the Early Childhood Services Coordinating Council about salaries but, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, no changes were made.

In conclusion, there are three main findings that come out of this section and need further investigation and review:

1. the inequality in the salaries paid to school board operator's teachers and private operator's teachers although both operators require early childhood services certified personnel to operate their programs;
2. the ability of school board operators to absorb kindergarten operational expenses out of their total budget where private operators must bear the costs independently;
3. and the grant structure of funding in respect to the taxation versus fee system.

All three of these concerns would be eliminated if kindergarten became a mandatory part of the school system.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Summary

The purpose of this study was

1. to investigate the opinions of selected school administrators about major events in the development of early childhood services programs,
2. to investigate the opinions of selected school administrators about the present organization and possible incorporation of kindergartens as a required part of the educational system,
3. to explain what these school administrators see as some of the advantages and disadvantages of this possible incorporation.

Data were collected by the use of a semi-structured interview. Seven interviews were carried out with individuals who had been extensively involved in early childhood services programs in the Edmonton Public School District. The length of the interviews ranged from one and a half to two and a half hours. The data from the interviews were analyzed by the means of latent content analysis.

The analysis of the data may be summarized as follows. First, in regard to major events in the development of early childhood services programs several interesting issues were discovered. It was generally felt that parents played a

large part in the creation of school board operated kindergartens. The parental role was mainly in the form of a strong lobby to government. The lobby was a result of the fact that initial government funding patterns for kindergartens meant that only already existing kindergartens were receiving funds. This situation served to perpetuate or heighten inequalities that already existed in the provision of kindergarten programs.

The creation of school board operated kindergartens meant that kindergartens started to become more rationalized. There were both advantages and disadvantages to this process. From the positive point of view kindergartens gained a more stable future from the guaranteed provision of funds. On the negative side the process of rationalization resulted in a certain amount of loss of autonomy for kindergarten programs. Also the development of kindergartens was not only seen as a one way process. Although there was no doubt that kindergartens had been considerably influenced by the other grades of school, several interviewees also felt that kindergarten had an influence on the rest of the school. This influence was seen as being manifest in two ways, 1) the adoption of the concept of the whole child being the focus of education and 2) the adoption of the concept of parental involvement in the planning and operation of the higher levels of school.

In regard to the second area of inquiry with which this study was concerned the following summary is presented. The

majority of interviewees felt that the existing two types of kindergarten, private and school board operated should be retained. The main arguments against incorporation of private operated kindergartens into the school system was the right of parents to choose their child's early education. A number of other issues which related to the difference between the two existing types of kindergarten operators were also raised. These issues were the commonality of philosophies within the programs, the monitoring of programs, the differences in teachers' salaries in the two programs and the transition from the respective programs to grade one.

In regard to the issue of making kindergarten a mandatory part of the school system all but one interviewee felt that this was not a desirable move. Again the right of parents to choose was cited as a major issue against mandatory kindergarten. The issue of the transition from kindergarten to grade one was also raised here and it was felt this was a major concern in regard to this age of schooling and an effort should be made to ensure the transition was as smooth as possible. It was felt, however, that this transition should not sacrifice the relatively unstructured nature of kindergarten and it should retain its philosophy of focusing on all areas of a child's development.

The final area of the study dealt with some of the advantages of kindergarten being incorporated as a required

part of school board operated education programs. The interviewees raised a number of issues about several areas that would be directly influenced by this type of move. These areas were: teacher benefits, facilities, student benefits, program needs, support staff, administration, and salaries and benefits. The overall impression of the interviewees was that each of these areas were better dealt with if kindergartens were incorporated as a required part of the school system. Although there were some disadvantages cited many more advantages were seen if this system was put into place.

B. Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this study. While most of these directly emanate from the results of the study there are also a number of conclusions that can be drawn from other parts of the study.

1. There is a dearth of literature that deals with the kindergarten area. This is evidenced by the fact that many of the sources used in this study are from primary sources, e.g., reports, government documents, minutes, etc. There were very few secondary level studies that could be found.
2. The relationship of school board operated kindergartens and privately operated kindergartens is under researched. This again is evidenced by the lack of material in this area.

3. Those individuals in administrative positions in school board operated kindergartens know little about how privately operated programs function. This was evident when the interviewees were asked about private operators and most indicated they knew little or nothing about these types of programs. This fact may in turn lead us to conclude that there is little communication between these two types of agencies.
4. Parents have played a large part in the development and operation of kindergarten programs. There is concern that if kindergartens become a mandatory part of the school system this parental involvement may be lost.
5. Kindergartens have undergone a process of rationalization since they became a de facto part of the school system, this has had both positive and negative consequences.
6. Most of the people interviewed felt that there was a need for two types of kindergarten operators within the province.
7. The individuals interviewed did not feel that kindergarten should become a required part of the school system.
8. There is a paradox in regard to the incorporation of kindergarten as a part of the school system. As noted above interviewees did not feel that it should be incorporated, yet on the other hand each one of them was able to cite a number of advantages to its

incorporation.

9. Many of the issues that surrounded the early development of kindergartens are being raised again as the issue of articulation emerges. These issues relate to parental involvement, transitions between levels, and the downward projection of grade one requirements.
10. Articulation is generally viewed as a positive move provided that the issues highlighted above can be resolved and that kindergarten does not loose its autonomy.

C. Recommendations for Further Study

As a result of this study the following recommendations for further study are suggested:

1. A detailed history of the development of early childhood services programs should be undertaken. To date only a handful of major studies have provided any background material as to the historical perspectives set out by the establishment of the Early Childhood Services Branch in 1973.
2. A comparative study of the structure and operating processes of school board operated and privately operated kindergartens should be undertaken. There appears to be great disparities between the operational procedures of these two types of kindergarten operators. Although they both fall under the governing arm of the Early Childhood Services Branch, Alberta Education,

greater liberties are often granted to the school board operator because of the large organizational unit within which it operates. A stronger supervisory role should be assumed by the Early Childhood Services Branch, Alberta Education, in relation to the school board operator to ensure that policies and guidelines are being adhered to. At this time there appears to be little or no communication between school board and private operators in the province which indeed is horific when the original intent was for "more coordination" between these types of programs.

3. An extensive questionnaire survey should be undertaken to determine opinions on whether or not kindergarten should be a required part of schooling and the advantages and disadvantages of this type of system. A major factor in the delivery of an effective early childhood services program is the teacher and the parents. These groups should be questioned as to their opinions in regard to mandatory kindergarten in the province.
4. The paradox that this study raised, i.e., the fact that interviewees felt that kindergarten should not be mandatory yet saw many advantages if it was, should be investigated in more depth. The fact that this paradox exists arises from the varying perceptions people have of these programs across the province. A major review or re-evaluation as to the direction of these programs must

take place in this province. The discrepancies between programs, even within school board operators, has created a situation not much unlike those prior to 1973. A clear definition of policies, guidelines and philosophies must be set out for both private and school board operators. An individual school district should not be able to alter these stated policies and guidelines because of their own internal restructuring(i.e., Edmonton Public School District's school based budgetting).

5. All aspects of the process of articulation need extensive study. It is too naive to assume that simply because articulation has been given priority in 1985-1986 it will, in fact, come to be. The term "articulation" is indeed a new word given to an old concept. One which was being referred to in the early 1970's but more in terms of the scope of early childhood education in kindergarten through grade 3. If kindergarten is not considered a prepatory year or a downward projection of grade 1 or in fact a grade of school why must there be planning with grades 1, 2 and 3.
6. The strongest recommendation would be that the Early Childhood Services Branch, Alberta Education, accept and indeed carry out its initial committment to early childhood education from 0 - 8 years as stated in the 1970's. There is a need for greater coordination and

supervisory governing of these programs to ensure quality of programs wherever the child may attend. When this recommendation can be made thirteen years after the initial establishment of Early Childhood Services in 1973 the question must really be asked "How far have we come?".

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Appendix A

The Interview Schedule

The Interview Schedule

1. Interviewee's Knowledge about the History and Development of the Early Childhood Services Programs in Alberta.

   a. Could you tell me what you know about the history and development of the early childhood services programs in the province of Alberta, for example, how they were formed, who were the key figures in their inception, and what were the initial guidelines set out for the establishment of these programs?

   b. Early childhood services programs in the province have supported kindergarten programs for the 4 1/2 - 5 1/2 year olds. Could you tell me what you know about the organization of these programs, for example, who operates them, where they are set up, the programs they offer and who teaches them.

   c. In your opinion what are some of the major goals and objectives set out by the Dept. of Ed., Alberta Education, for kindergarten programs?

   d. Have there been changes in these goals and objectives? How have these changes affected the program?

2. Interviewee's background and involvement with an

Early Childhood Services Program.

a. Could you tell me about your involvement with early childhood services programs, i.e. when you were involved, the duration of your involvement, the role you performed and how or if you are currently involved.

b. Did you feel you had a decision-making role? What decisions were you responsible for making?

c. During your involvement what were some of the major events you saw in the development of the kindergarten program?

d. What are some of the major changes you have seen in kindergarten programs?

e. How have these changes affected the kindergartens and the people involved in them?

3. Present organization and implications of kindergarten operation.

a. There are two types of kindergarten operators in the province - school board and private. What is your knowledge about these two operators and how they exist in the province?

b. In your opinion, is there a need for two operators in the province. If not, who do you feel should operate kindergarten programs in the province?

c. At present kindergarten attendance is voluntary. Do you feel it should be mandatory? If so, why? If not, why?

4. Areas of concern in school board operated vis a vis privately operated kindergartens.

a. Teacher Benefits

1)

In your opinion what criteria should be used when selecting a kindergarten teacher?

2)

Do you feel it is beneficial for a kindergarten teacher to be an integral part of the school or to remain autonomous?

3)

In your opinion what benefits do you feel a teacher gains from teaching for a school board operated program as opposed to a private operated program? Or the reverse?

4)

If we see kindergarten become "mandatory" in what direction do you see the training of early childhood specialists going? Should there still be regulations governing those who are able to teach this program?

5)

Although kindergarten is not a required grade of school, the Department of Education is considering mandatory K-3 articulation planning for school boards. What implications do you see for kindergarten teachers posed by the situation of articulation planning?

b. Facilities

1)

How important are facilities in the delivery of early childhood programs?

2)

Across the system do you feel there are disparities between facilities and the programs which are able to operate in them?

3)

What advantages or disadvantages do you see to kindergartens operating in schools?

4)

When do you feel there should be class size restrictions in respect to facilities, program needs and student benefits?

c. Student Benefits

1)

In your opinion, what benefits does a child gain by attending kindergarten? How important is it for the child to attend?

2)

Do you feel there are benefits to the child who attends a school board operated program as opposed to the privately operated programs? In what respects?

3)

In school board operated programs the issue of "retention" is raised. Do you feel a child should be retained in a kindergarten program and under what circumstances?

4)

At present in the Edmonton Public Schools there are K/1

split classes. Do you see this as an appropriate placement for students in the kindergarten program?

5)

There appears to be disparities amongst the teaching practices of kindergarten teachers, i.e. centres opposed to seatwork, structured as opposed to unstructured, downward projection of Grade One curriculum. Do you see this as a problem? How could it be rectified?

d. Program Needs

1)

Through your involvement with kindergarten programs do you feel there is a need for more direction and guidelines in respect to the teaching of these programs, i.e. uniformity of teaching styles(centres), a provincial kindergarten curriculum, etc.?

2)

The Department of Education is introducing the concept of "articulation" in Alberta schools in 1985-1986. Could you please tell me what you understand "articulation"to be?

3)

Articulation may become mandatory for K-3 throughout the province. What implications does this have for kindergarten? 4)

In your opinion do you feel it is advantageous for kindergarten to be involved in the program planning of grades 1, 2 and 3?

5)

Could you please list what you feel are important components of a successful kindergarten program?

6)

Do you feel the kindergarten program should remain autonomous in its objectives or become integrated into the school curriculum?

e. Support Staff

1)

Could you tell me what type of support staff are available to all kindergarten programs operating in the Edmonton Public School District? i.e. psychologists, speech therapists, etc. Is there any cost incurred by the individual school or program for their services?

2)

In your opinion have there been any significant changes in the organization of support staff for kindergartens, i.e. additions, deletions of personnel. How have these changes affected the overall program?

3)

As far as you are aware are teacher aides an integral part of every early childhood program? How do they benefit the program? How should they be used in the program?

4)

Which factors do you feel account for an individual school acquiring a teacher aide for the kindergarten program?

5)

Do you think kindergarten teacher aides should have special

early childhood training in order to assist in kindergarten programs?

6)

What role do you see parents playing in the support and development of kindergarten programs?

7)

Do you feel there is still the same emphasis placed on parent groups (LAC) to participate in planning areas of the kindergarten programs?

f. Administration

1)

Could you tell me what you know about the development of the administration of the early childhood services programs in the Edmonton Public School District?

2)

What are some of the most important changes in the administration of these kindergarten programs?

3)

How have these changes affected the overall concept of the early childhood services programs?

4)

Do you feel there is the same emphasis put on the quality and coordination of early childhood services programs as there was at the inception in 1973?

5)

How do budgetary decisions at the school level affect the kindergarten programs?

6)

Do you feel there are provisions made for each school kindergarten program to operate from the same base, i.e. equipment, materials, facilities, support staff. If there are discrepancies why do they exist?

g. Salaries

1)

There is a difference between the salaries of school board operated kindergarten teachers and private operated kindergarten teachers in the province.

2)

What do you feel are some of the key reasons for the difference in salaries between school board operated teachers and private operated teachers?

3)

How do you feel these differences in salary may afffect the quality of staff and programs in school board operated programs and privately operated programs?

4)

What other benefits do you see a teacher gaining by working for a school board operated program in terms of wage, benefits, professional affiliations, etc.?

Individuals Interviewed for this Study

1. Mrs. Sherry Capowski, Edmonton Public School District teacher, former Primary Consultant for Edmonton Public School District
2. Mrs. Kay Chernowski, retired, former Early Childhood Program Supervisor for Edmonton Public School District
3. Mrs. Ruth LeBlanc, Curriculum Planning Services Coordinator for Edmonton Public School District, former Early Childhood Program Supervisor(K-3) for Edmonton Public School District
4. Mrs. Sylvia McLaren, Principal of Brookside Elementary School, former Edmonton Public School District Kindergarten teacher
5. Mrs. Mary Oswald, Early Childhood Consultant for Edmonton Public School District, former Principal for Edmonton Public School District
6. Mrs. Pat Semeniuk, Principal Julian Kinisky Elementary School for Edmonton Public School District, former Early Childhood Associate Supervisor for Edmonton Public School Board
7. Dr. Sue Therrien, Vice-Principal Harry Ainlay High School for Edmonton Public School District, former Early Childhood Program Supervisor for Edmonton Public School District